

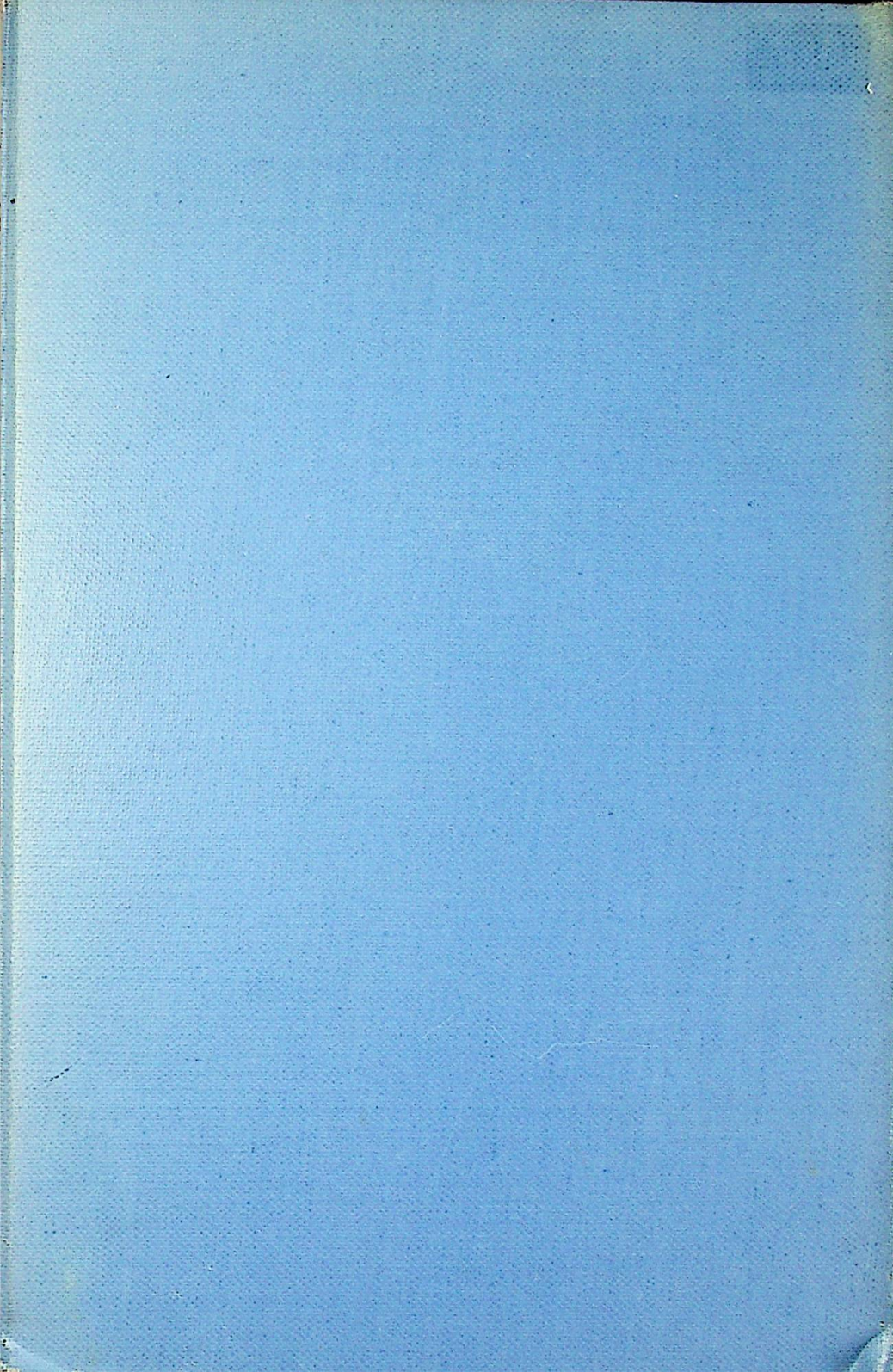
Sailing  
Days  
on the  
Penob-  
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WASSON

NORTON

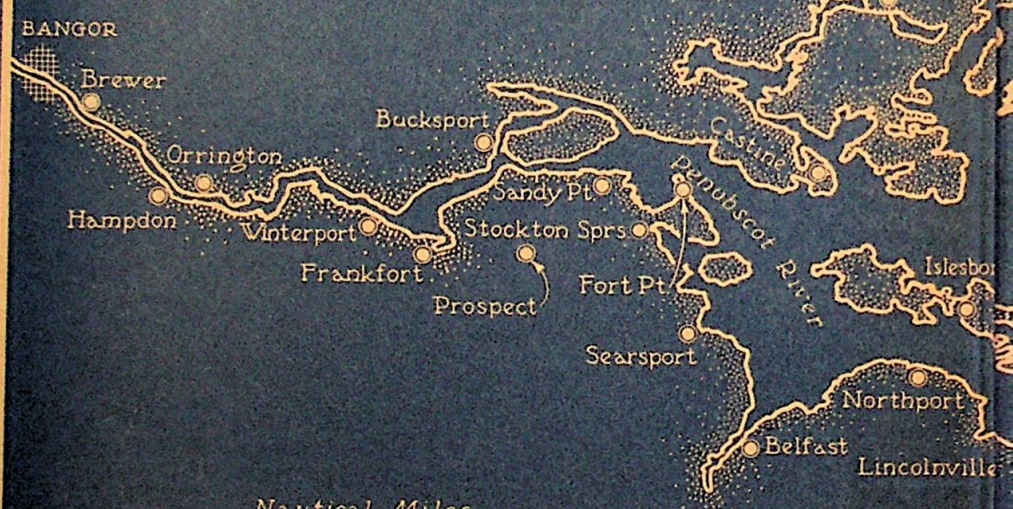








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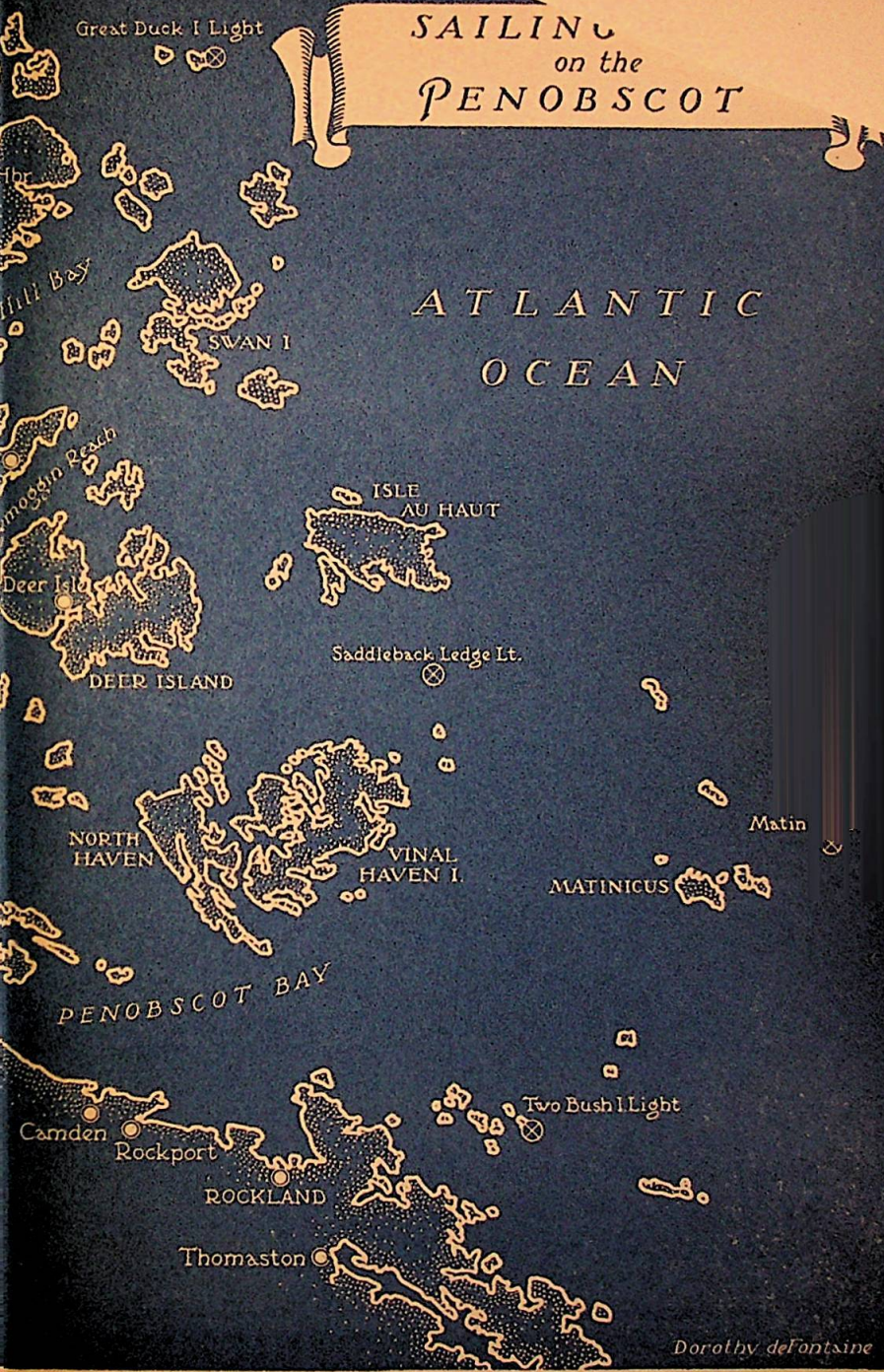


*Nautical Miles*





*SAILING*  
on the  
*PENOBSCOT*







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Sailing Days on  
the Penobscot<sup>29</sup>



Public Trust in  
the Government



# Sailing Days on the Penobscot æ

The Story of the River and  
the Bay in the Old Days æ æ

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By GEORGE S. WASSON

With an Introduction and Epilogue  
By WALTER MUIR WHITEHILL



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THE  
OF  
AMERICAN HISTORY  
AND  
MICHAEL C. WATSON



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## Introduction

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**F**ORTY-FIVE years ago George Savary Wasson was happily at work on his beach at Kittery Point, Maine, scraping the hull of his boat *Lorna*, when one of his small boys came running down the hill, shouting that Mr. Henry James had called. Wasson shouted back to the boy, "Tell him to come right down," and Henry James, wrapped in a long tweed cape, did. A pleasant visit followed, and though Mrs. Wasson was duly horrified at the casual reception of the elegant James—who was staying with their neighbor, William Dean Howells—her husband seemed to see no irregularity in having asked his caller to come down to the beach over the rough footpath through the orchard.

This call was but one of the unexpected incidents resulting from the publication in 1903 by Houghton-Mifflin and Company of Wasson's *Cap'n Simeon's Store*. These stories, based upon a penetrating study of the thoughts and language of Kittery Point fishermen of the late nineteenth century, and set against the background of the vil-



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lage's general store, aroused a limited but discriminating enthusiasm. Thomas Wentworth Higginson hailed *Cap'n Simeon's Store* as "the only book which records faithfully and fully the quaint dialect, now passing away, of the old New England coast." Mark Twain told Howells that its eighth chapter, "Rusticators at the Cove," was one of the funniest stories he ever read. Yet neither *Cap'n Simeon's Store*, nor *The Green Shay* and *Home from Sea* which followed it in 1905 and 1908, respectively, ever had a wide popular success. However, only ten years ago—although they had long been out of print—Donald Moffat described them as "the most authentic Maine stories ever written," and the late Fannie Hardy Eckstorm, in an appreciation of George Wasson published in the *Essex Institute Historical Collections* for January 1943, ranked Wasson with Sarah Orne Jewett and Roland E. Robinson as "the three masters of the New England idiom."

George Wasson's first three books were works of fiction, based upon closely observed and only thinly disguised fact. *Sailing Days on the Penobscot*, which was published by the Marine Research Society at Salem a few weeks after his death in 1932, is another matter. It is pure maritime history, written by one who had not only inherited sympathies for, but seventy years first-hand knowledge of, his subject. When, to this unrivalled personal experience, were added a painter's perceptive observation, a philologist's ear for language, and the literary skill of a good storyteller, it is not surprising that the result was hard to beat. Robert F. Duncan was right when, in his *Cruising Guide to the New England Coast*, he listed *Sailing Days*



## INTRODUCTION

*on the Penobscot* as "required reading," and called it "a book which should be on every boat cruising these waters." It is, consequently, more than an act of local piety to make this book once more available to those who already love and those who wish to learn about the Penobscot River and Bay.

Although George Savary Wasson was born in Groveland, Massachusetts, on 27 August 1855, his family hailed from Penobscot Bay, where they had settled immediately after the Revolution. The first of his Wasson ancestors to arrive in New England was a teacher, who came over in 1724 with the Scotch-Irish settlers of Londonderry, New Hampshire. That teacher's son, also a teacher, lived most of his life in Groton, Massachusetts, and four of his sons went into the war of the Revolution. When peace was declared, three of them, having been paid off in depreciated Continental scrip and having no very bright prospects in Massachusetts, went to the province of Maine and settled on a hill above Bagaduce Bay in what later was set apart from Castine as the township of Brooksville. George Wasson's grandfather, "Squire" David Wasson—the son of one of these three Revolutionary soldiers—was closely identified with the shipping industry of Brooksville, and built vessels there which hauled lumber from Bangor to Boston. "Squire" David's son, David Atwood Wasson, after studying at Bowdoin College and the Bangor Theological Seminary, was in 1851 ordained as pastor of an evangelical church at Groveland, and there his son, George Savary, was born. The Reverend David Atwood Wasson, although brought up in the orthodox tradition, soon fell in with



## INTRODUCTION

Emerson, Thoreau, Thomas Wentworth Higginson and Theodore Parker, and found his spiritual level with them. For a time he assisted Mr. Higginson at Worcester, then lived at Concord, and from 1865 to 1867 was minister of the Twenty-eighth Congregational Society in Boston (Theodore Parker's church), but poor health forced his retirement, and for most of the last twenty years of his life he lived quietly in West Medford, Massachusetts.

Although brought up in this intellectual atmosphere, young George Wasson never lost touch with the Maine coast, for he spent most of his summers with his grandfather at Brooksville. At the age of nine, he was put on board one of "Squire" David Wasson's schooners at Boston for the voyage down east. As the lumber coasters always moved back to Bangor to get the first crack at cargoes, the captain did not want to lose time delivering a small boy at Brooksville, and so George was put off at Bucksport to walk the rest of the way to his grandfather's. Although well loaded with a carpet bag, he was so interested in the race that he thought the captain was entirely right to dump him ashore in this manner. These summer visits he loved, entering fully into the life of Brooksville. When his grandfather's schooner *David Wasson*, whose loss is described in Chapter II, was chartered for a cargo of lumber from Bangor to Curaçao, George was asked to accompany his cousins on the voyage, and would doubtless have been drowned with them had not his father providentially decided to take him to Germany instead for a period of study.



## INTRODUCTION

From Stuttgart on 29 October 1872 the Reverend Mr. Wasson wrote to a friend: "Georgie has been horribly homesick and has hated Germany for the crime of not being West Medford or 'Down East,' but has now got into the Art Academy and is delighted." For three years he studied under Professor Funk at Stuttgart, and although he found German art instruction uninspiring, painting became his life work. It is characteristic, however, that while at Stuttgart he spent a good deal of time building a huge flat-bottomed boat named *Yankee Doodle*, in which he proceeded to cruise down the Neckar River from Stuttgart to the Rhine. It is also characteristic that while in Germany he once spent a night in jail because he would not remove his hat at the request of a ticket collector at the opera.

On returning to West Medford George Wasson fell into a pleasant pattern of painting and sailing. He was invited by J. Foxcroft Cole, whose work he admired, to share a studio in the Century Building in Boston, on Washington Street near Winter Street, and felt that to be the proudest moment of his life. In 1876 he became the owner of the yawl *Gulnare*, followed a little later by the *Ionian*, and in these boats he successively explored the New England coast from Point Judith to Campobello, often accompanied by Cole. A contemporary Boston journalist thus described his methods: "Wasson works quickly, and has done some of his best things in a single day. He is the fortunate possessor of a small yacht—the *Ionian*, an English yawl-rigged craft—on board of which he cruises along



## INTRODUCTION

the New England coast every summer, wandering about at his own sweet will, and filling his sketch-books with memoranda to be utilized in the winter. He usually takes an artist friend or two with him on these trips, and, as he has no crew, the wielders of the brush generally learn how to take in a main sail in a hurry as well as to splice the main brace." Often spending weeks at Isle au Haut or at Castine, he made innumerable sketches of all types of vessels and of shore and harbor scenes, and the oil paintings derived from these were exhibited at the Boston Art Club, at the exhibitions of the Paint and Clay Club and at the Museum of Fine Arts. In 1881 he sent a painting of the Mystic River at Medford to the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts exhibition of American artists, and in 1883 he had a one-man show at J. Eastman Chase's Gallery in Boston.

Wasson's cruising brought him not only subjects for pictures but a devoted wife. Having had one look at Amelia Inslee Bullock Webb, who was teaching school at Deer Isle, Maine, he scraped an introduction via the local post-mistress, and, in a remarkably short time persuaded her to marry him. The wedding took place on 22 November 1885.

The Reverend David A. Wasson's death on 21 January 1887 diminished the ties with West Medford. Not long after, when cruising to Castine, George Wasson put in at Kittery Point; thought it the most paintable spot he had ever seen, and determined to settle there. This he did in 1889, building a house with a studio in the top story, where



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half-models of ships and nameboards from vessels wrecked along the coast made sympathetic companions for his own paintings. When he first arrived at Kittery Point, George Wasson wore the usual white trousers of yachtsmen of the time, but soon gave them up as he settled more deeply into the local scene. Every bit of it he loved. The general store became his club, and its frequenters his friends. Just as he recorded in his sketch books the details of scows, pinkies, hay schooners and wrecks, so he salted down the speech of his neighbors in notebooks, and from this treasury of language evolved his stories. Into these notes went details of local superstition, weather lore, and such fine phrases of daily conversation as:

"I'll show him what trees make shingles."

"That won't buy baby no frock."

"Sail? That schooner won't sail no faster'n a toad in a bucket of tar."

"She steered like a hen-coop."

"One of them tormented politiciansers."

"I wouldn't trust him with a red-hot stove."

"I used to swear the worst way: take it right to home there even, I couldn't so much as open my mouth but what I'd tear off a chunk!"

"He's so lazy he wouldn't heave water on his mother if she was burning to death."

"You take and heave yourself off'n the dock, and holler 'Here goes nothin'.'"

"'Twould been money in his pocket if he'd never been borned."



## INTRODUCTION

"Look at him, buckin' agin the grace of God and the ebb-tidel"

"You can turn to and start from Kittery Point to go to any blamed place in this world."

Even Wasson's neighbors unconsciously recognized his skill in making his characters "talk Kittery Point," for when *Cap'n Simeon's Store* appeared they expressed incredulity that anyone should want to read such a book when it was nothing more than what you could hear in Frisbee's store down the road.

Much as George Wasson loved Kittery Point, he spent many weeks of each summer exploring other parts of the coast. Mrs. Wasson hated boats, however, and so remained at home during the long summer cruises to the eastward. As their two sons, David Arnold (1887-1915) and Lewis Talcott (1889-1912), acquired sea legs they would accompany their father on his wanderings, first in the *Lorna* (built at Isle au Haut in 1887) and later in the *Bonnie Doon*, which replaced the *Lorna* in 1894. Taking along a barrel of Mrs. Wasson's molasses cookies, George Wasson and his boys would catch and fry fish, fill themselves full of strong tea and coffee, and generally enjoy themselves for weeks on end.

Few men can have known the coast so well. As Mrs. Eckstorm has pointed out: "From Great Boar's Head to York Nubble he knew everywhere the set of the tide and the sunken rock; he knew the sudden squall that made him cast off his sheet and drop his mainsail with a run, the blanket of fog that closed in murkily and shut out his



## INTRODUCTION

bearings, the change of wind that cut him off from his desired harbor for the night, the current which in a calm would carry him too near the dangerous rocks he would avoid—whatever he speaks of in his stories he had experienced in his cruising. No one could have written that matter of fact account in 'The Sea-Glin' of trying to make Townsend Harbor from Rockland when a storm was brewing to the eastward unless he had been over the course himself. All this practical experience of the sea was what George Wasson used in his painting and writing. No one can paint a vessel well who does not know the part of her that is under water."

Certainly Wasson had no liking for painting anything that he did not know thoroughly and intimately. Shortly after the Spanish War a captain at the Portsmouth Navy Yard commissioned a painting of the battle of Santiago and furnished all kinds of pernickety instructions about flags, smoke and such like. It was to be a huge picture, and Wasson worked and worked at it. Then one day he suddenly concluded, "I'm not going to have that damn thing go out in my name," so carefully placed it on four chairs at one end of his studio, took a long running leap and jumped right through the middle of the canvas!

The highly congenial life at Kittery Point might have gone on indefinitely had it not been for the premature deaths of the two splendid boys. Lewis, an Ensign in the United States Navy, died in 1912, and his older brother, David Arnold—who had inherited much of his father's literary skill—died in 1915. Kittery Point now became too



## INTRODUCTION

full of associations for the father and mother and for David's widow, who made her home with them, and so in 1916 the surviving Wassons moved to Bangor, thus returning to the Penobscot.

The *Lorna* had been sold to W. Starling Burgess and replaced in 1911 by a *Bonnie Doon II*, but in 1917 another change of boat occurred. In the *Wave Crest*, his last boat, George Wasson would live through the summer at Castine, while his wife remained ashore in a boarding house or hotel. Although he found much to interest him in the Penobscot region, Bangor winters had little attraction. Mrs. Eckstorm published a sketch of a design for a new City of Bangor seal which she received from him after the hard winter of 1922-23, consisting of crossed snow shovels, with the motto:

"Full Garbage Pail [frozen] . . . Empty Coal-Hod."

When A. P. Cushman sent George Wasson two poems in January, 1926, he received the following characteristic reply:

"Thank you for the two poems entitled 'Weather' and 'Snow.' The lines upon weather evince a mind at once poetic and philosophical, but it surprises and grieves me that a person undeniably gifted in the art of versification can so misuse, abuse, maltreat, stultify and, if I must say it, prostitute his talent as to deliberately compose a panegyric upon *snow*.

"Of course I am aware that various other poets, notably Whittier and Emerson, have also dealt with this matter, but in my humble opinion the choice of such



## INTRODUCTION

a subject must be listed among the vagaries and eccentricities of genius.

"I regard snow in any form and at any time or place as an abomination. I see no more beauty in it when gently falling in feathery flakes and covering the landscape o'er with a mantle of purest white than when driven in my face and down the back of my neck by a howling No'th-easter. It is no more attractive to me when gilded by the setting sun on towering Alpine peaks than is the grimy domestic article common to our back yards in late spring. I like it as little in the form of coffee colored slush under foot as when digging through a long series of six foot drifts in anticipation of the milk man's belated arrival.

"In short, if I had the poetic gift at all, and felt a compelling urge to make use of it, rather than attempt to sing the beauties of snow, I would at once seize pen in hand and address a Hymn of Praise to the German Measles, the Boll-Weevil or the Volstead Act.

"Yours for the presumably snowless months in this climate of July and August.

Geo. S. W."

It should be noted that George Wasson classed the Volstead Act with snow. Although an inveterate pipe smoker, he cared for liquor only in moderation, but Prohibition was anathema to him as an abridgment of personal liberty. Consequently he occasionally brewed a wretched beer in his kitchen and conscientiously drank it on board his boat.



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In the years following the first World War, George Wasson came to realize that the record of shipping in the Penobscot would be forever lost unless something were promptly done to preserve it, and as no one else seemed greatly concerned with the matter he began searching his memory. An article on "The Vanished Pinky" he contributed to the April 1930 number of *Old-Time New England*, the bulletin of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, and followed this in April 1931 by another on "The Old Rockland, Maine, Lime Trade." George Francis Dow, Editor of *Old-Time New England*, urged Wasson to write at greater length for the Marine Research Society, a Salem publishing venture with which Dow was also connected, and so the plan for *Sailing Days on the Penobscot* was evolved. Lincoln Colcord of Searsport, who knew the history of shipbuilding and of Maine vessels in the foreign trade as intimately as Wasson knew the coasters and fishermen, was persuaded to compile from Custom House records an extensive annotated list of vessels built on Penobscot River and Bay to be published with Wasson's reminiscent chapters. Lincoln Colcord's share in the work was for the historian rather than the general reader, and so his detailed record of shipbuilding has been omitted from this new edition, which, by permission of the Marine Research Society, once more makes George Wasson's classic work available to those who, in reality or in imagination, sail the waters that he loved.

To George Wasson's devoted daughter-in-law, Mrs.



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David A. Wasson, now living once more at Kittery Point, and to his friends Stephen Wheatland and A. P. Cushman, I am deeply grateful for their help in evoking the memory of a lovable New Englander.

WALTER MUIR WHITEHILL

Boston Athenaeum  
January 1949



The first of the two main parts of the book is devoted to a general survey of the history of the subject, and to a discussion of the various methods which have been employed for its study. The second part is devoted to a detailed examination of the various theories which have been advanced to explain the phenomena which are observed in the study of the subject.

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## Preface

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IT HAS long been hoped that some more competent person would write concerning the ships and smaller craft of Penobscot Bay, Maine, with some account of the immense shipment of lumber from the Penobscot River. No one has appeared and meantime much valuable material is fast becoming forgotten. A few years more and only dry figures will remain to tell that this very vital interest ever existed.

Lumber carrying from Maine was a very important phase of the nation's commerce. As a school for seamen in the handling of vessels under extraordinary circumstances, for over seventy-five years it equalled, and in some respects excelled, the thoroughly described whale fishery. On a coast so notoriously strewn with sunken ledges and shoals, so subject to dense fog and strong tidal currents, there was every opportunity for the display of seamanship, particularly for that highly prized quality known as "judgment in a fog." With a constant stream of vessels go-



## PREFACE

ing in opposite directions, the danger of collision was always great, and deep-water mariners fully realized that getting into the open sea relieved them of many anxieties. In appreciation of those unsung builders of America's glory on the seas this narrative has been written.

Grateful acknowledgments are made to my wife and daughter for their untiring assistance and also to Mrs. Fannie Hardy Eckstorm, Lincoln Colcord and Stephen Wheatland for their friendly interest and help.

Photographs for reproduction have been lent by: Miss Mildred C. Haley of Winterport; Miss Bertha M. Hall, Mrs. F. H. Eckstorm and J. Elmer Littlefield of Brewer; Miss Gertrude Veazie, F. W. Ayer, M. C. Pierce, Dr. O. B. Humphrey, Walter Higgins, Edwin Lord and Miss Esther Page of Bangor; Mrs. A. L. George of Camden; and especially to Lincoln Colcord of Searsport from whom came nearly one-half of the photographs reproduced in the following pages.

GEORGE S. WASSON

Bangor, Maine  
April 19, 1931



# I & The Penobscot the River

## Sailing Days on the Penobscot

It was a fine day when the wind was from the north and the sun was shining. The water was calm and the sky was blue. The boat was sailing smoothly and the crew was enjoying the ride. The Penobscot River was beautiful and the scenery was lovely. The boat was sailing towards the mouth of the river and the crew was looking forward to the day when they would reach the sea. The Penobscot River was a beautiful place and the crew was lucky to be sailing on it. The boat was sailing smoothly and the crew was enjoying the ride. The Penobscot River was beautiful and the scenery was lovely. The boat was sailing towards the mouth of the river and the crew was looking forward to the day when they would reach the sea. The Penobscot River was a beautiful place and the crew was lucky to be sailing on it.







## I    The Navigation of the River

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**B**ANGOR, for many years, was highly distinguished as exporting more lumber in vessels than any other place in the world on tide water. The long river Penobscot, in its twenty-four mile stretch from Bangor to the sea, a section often known to old mariners as "Bangor River," was then a teeming commercial artery of the first order. The following account has nothing to do with paddle-wheel steamboats of unique design which towed rafts and logs on the upper river, or slowly picked their devious way against the current, with supplies for distant lumber camps and passengers intending to wield axe or labor with peavey and pike pole. Only bare mention can be made of the strangely shaped Maynards and light canoes of birch bark so valiant in running the frequent rapids or "quick-water," and essential in floating logs from the great northern wilderness to feed a hundred greedy sawmills.



## SAILING DAYS ON THE PENOBSCOT

Most of these were located on far, up-river banks, though many operated at Bangor and at points a short distance below.

This tree cutting and log driving part of the strenuous business has been competently described and its manifold trials and dangers presented, but passage from salt water to head-of-tide at Bangor had its own thrills and is, in all respects, another story.

In the early days of shipping, navigation from the sea reached a mile or so above the town of Bangor proper to the "falls," which really were steep rapids in the river. Here, at the close of the eighteenth century, was built the first vessel, though later a covered bridge from Bangor to Brewer, since replaced by one of iron, formed the head of navigation. Shipbuilding early took a strong hold at the young town of Bangor, though destined, with shipping in general, to receive a body blow in the 1812 war with England.

A dam so high as to exclude all tide water was later built over the falls, and from just above is taken and filtered the town supply of fresh water, while directly below is the famous salmon pool. Great strength, as well as height, was necessary to withstand the regular freshets and also the extraordinary rise and fall of tide at Bangor. Even ordinary neap-tides there rise twelve feet and five inches, while monthly spring-tides may add two or three feet more; and in time of freshets, with much water pouring over the dam, even the highest wharves are often submerged. Here is a phenomenon over which scientists and others may well exercise gray matter. It is not to be ex-



## THE NAVIGATION OF THE RIVER

plained by the amount of water coming over the dam from above, for the same great rise continues in a dry season when perhaps only a few inches run over the dam.

This extreme rise and fall of tide at Bangor was also strangely symbolic of the rise and fall in American shipping both coastwise and overseas. Nowhere else did shipping rise to so great a height of local importance, and nowhere else upon the entire coast has the denuding effect of the exceptionally low-drain tide in commerce been more apparent.

Many other theories for the high rise of tide have been advanced, but at all events no such rise occurs at the river mouth, at any Penobscot Bay ports or, in fact, on the whole Atlantic coast until the Bay of Fundy is closely approached.

Notwithstanding this marked rise and fall of tide, the Penobscot River at Bangor and for many miles below, cannot be mistaken for anything but a strictly fresh water stream. Wharves and rocky shores only recently exposed by ebbing tide, are not only perfectly clear of all colorful marine growth, but look bleached and bare and in the hot sun already dry, as if never touched by water except during rains and the annual freshets of spring. The brown-tinted river, too, strongly suggests the staining of dead leaves, with the lily pads, mud turtles and pickerel of a far inland stream or millpond, all making the daily rise and fall of tides appear the more contradictory and entirely out of place.

In fact, paradoxical as it seems, an honest-to-goodness pickerel has been caught between tides at Bangor and in

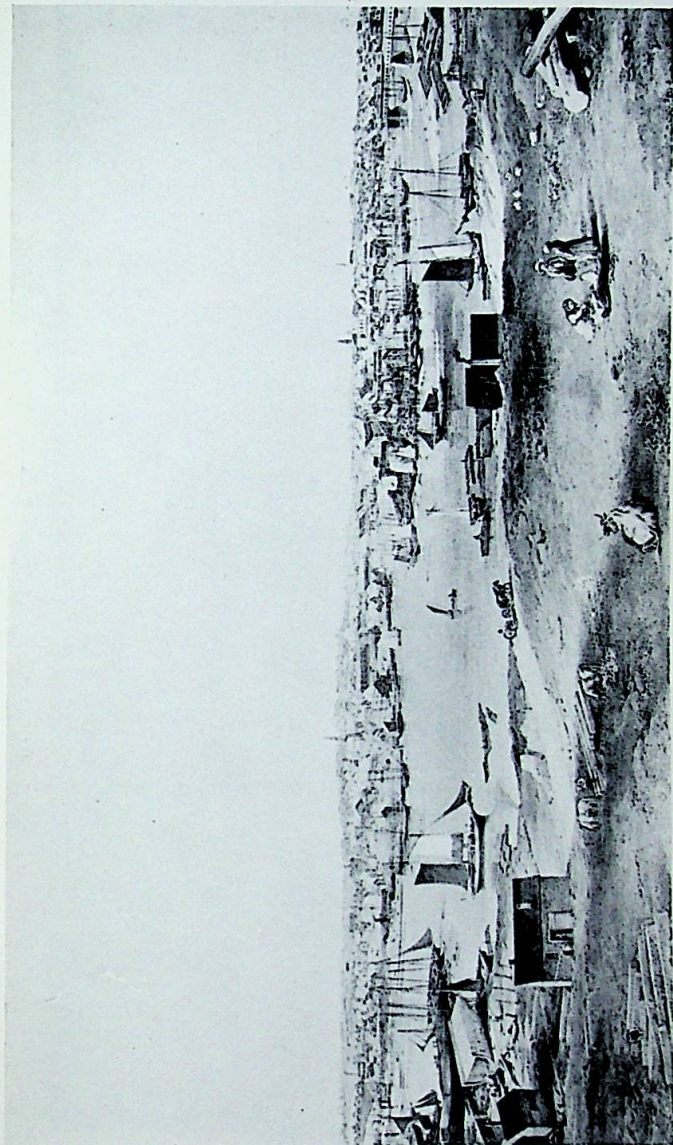


## SAILING DAYS ON THE PENOBSCOT

waters fairly alive with sea-going craft of every description. At Bangor, itself, was often to be seen the startlingly incongruous spectacle of vessels filling their casks with drinking water from a river where the rise and fall of tide was almost double that of any neighboring salt water port. To guard against any possible brackishness at high water, this filling of casks was always done at dead low tide or, to be more exact, at "low-water-slack." It was by many stoutly claimed that river water, though anything but limpid, and admittedly soon smelling to heaven in the cask, later purified itself and became of rare keeping quality. Others, however, suspicious of contamination even at that day and ready to be thought "nasty nice," would wisely have none of it for drinking purposes.

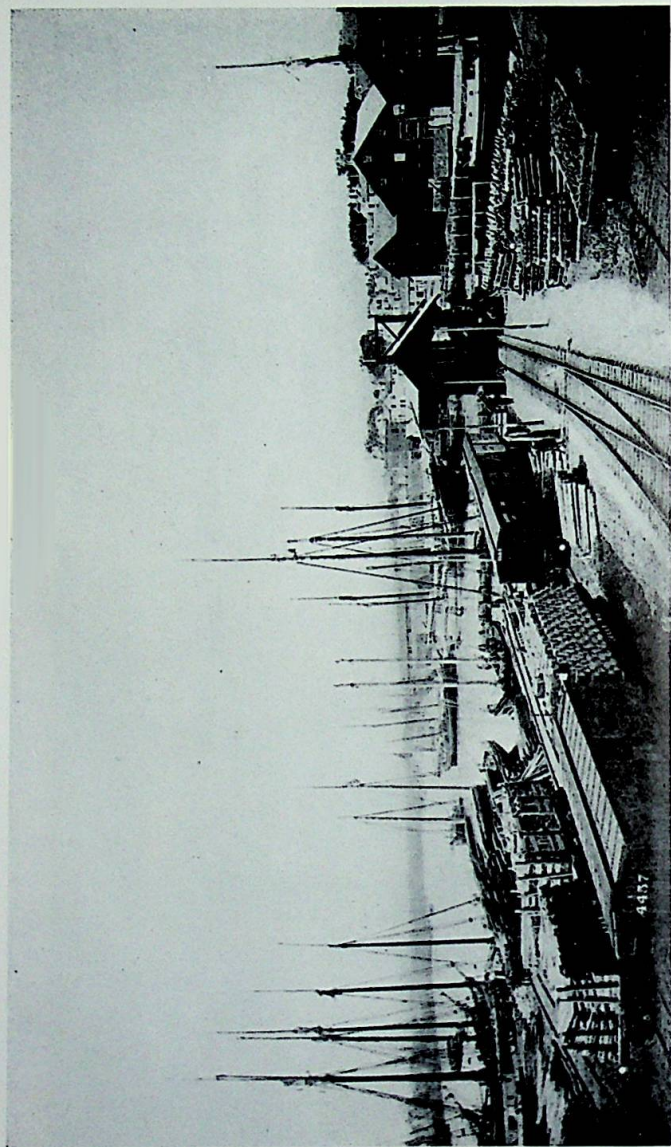
At Bangor the river has a depth of twenty feet at low tide, but a few miles below, this depth much decreases and the channel is made both narrow and crooked by shoals on either side. It is twenty-four miles from Bangor to Fort Point, where Penobscot Bay is supposed to begin, and in this distance the river not only makes several abrupt bends, but has extremely varying width and depth. For instance, in the long reach just above the town of Bucksport, called Marsh Bay, it is over a mile wide, though flats render the channel narrow and crooked and of no great depth. At Bucksport, however, eighteen miles below Bangor, the river narrows considerably and suddenly reaches the great depth of fourteen fathoms, which is many fathoms more than can be found at its mouth, or indeed in all the upper part of Penobscot Bay. Lower down, though,



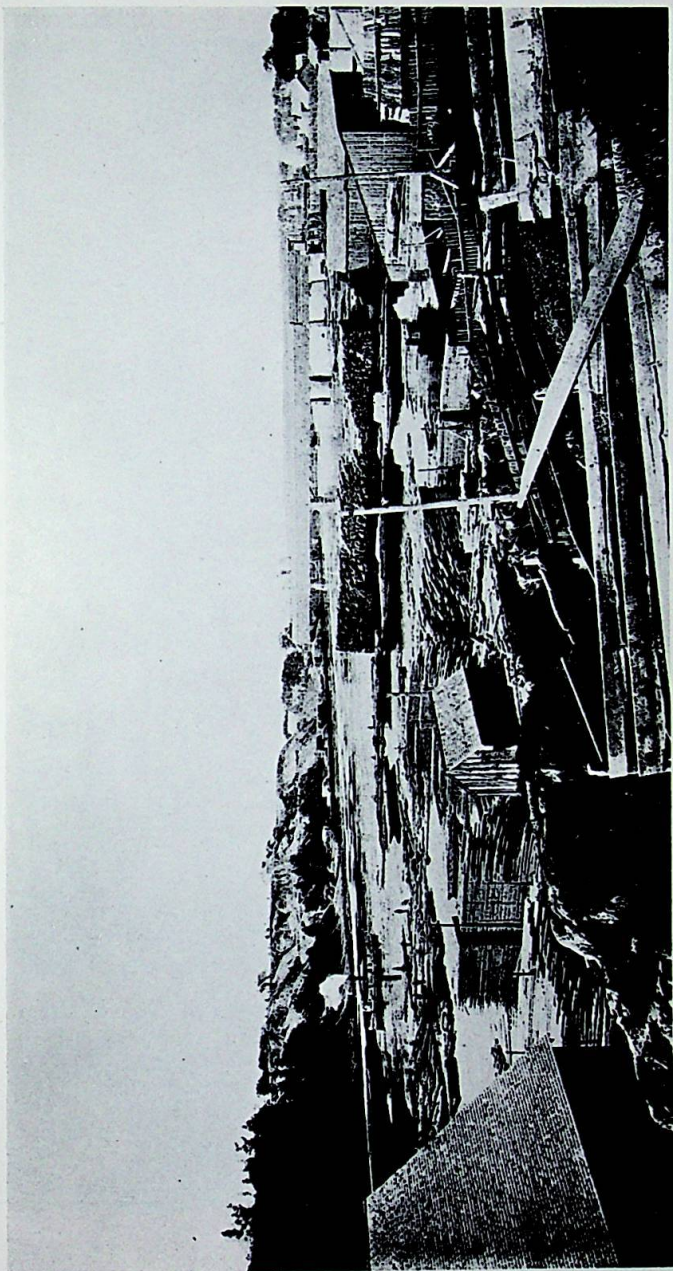


Bangor, Maine, in 1854. From a lithograph of a painting by J. W. Hill. Warren Shipyard (left); Ken-  
duskeag Stream; Oakes Shipyard (right); Covered Bridge to Brewer.





At the mouth of the Kenduskeag Stream, Bangor, in 1882.

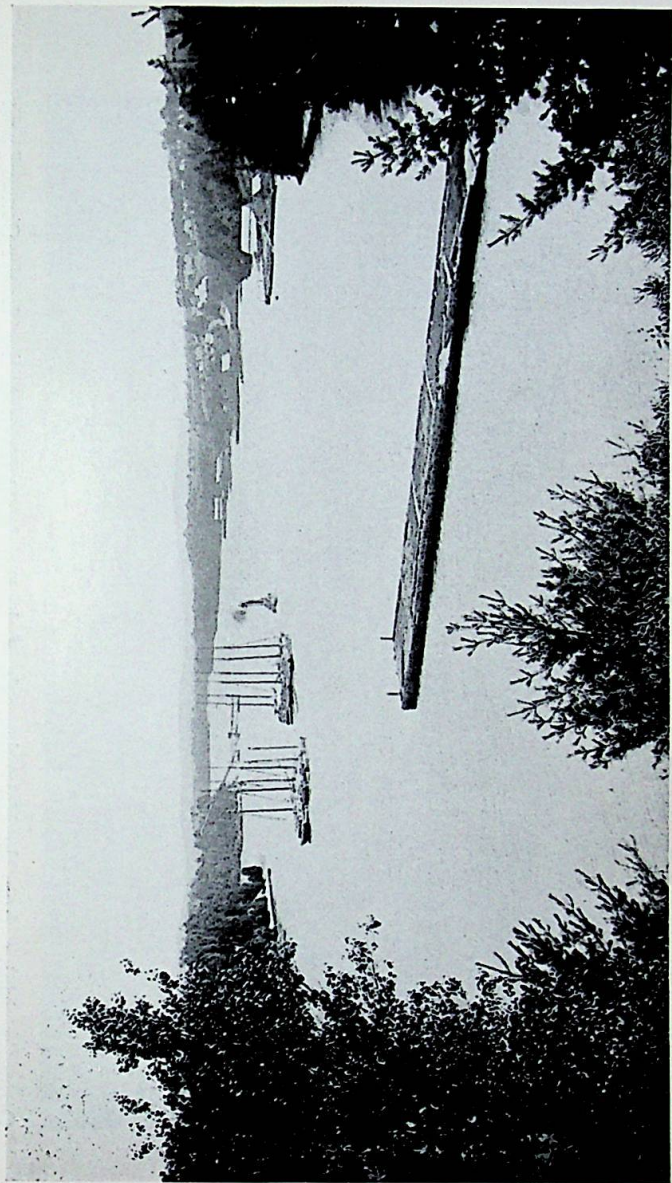


Lumber on the Penobscot River, above the Covered Bridge between Bangor and Brewer, in 1882.



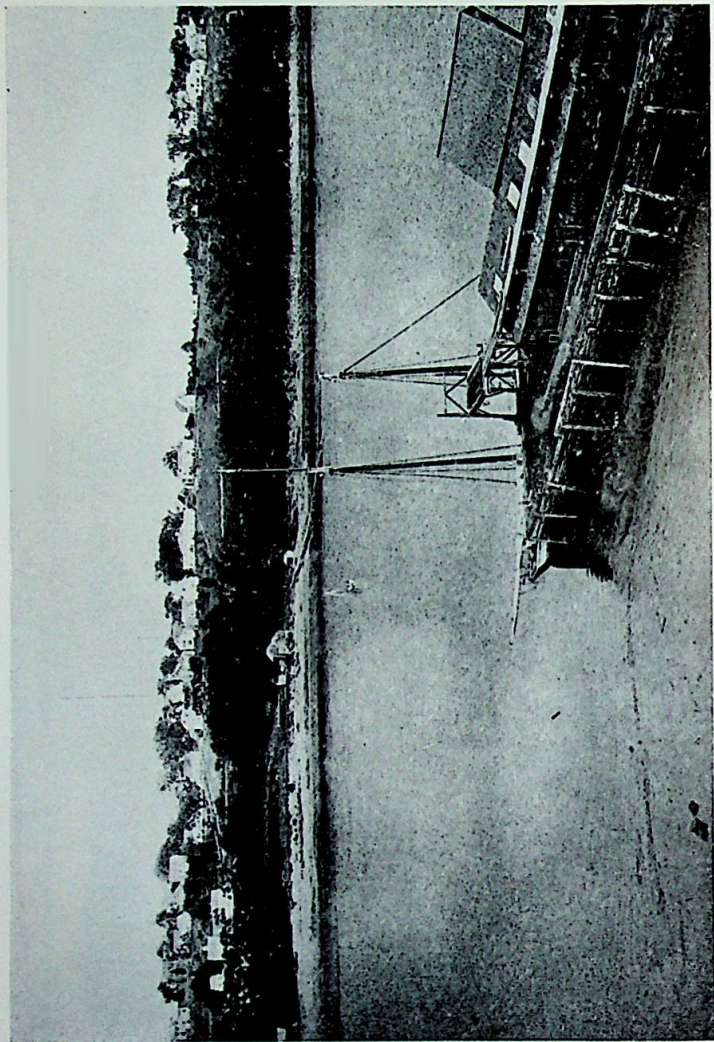


View of Bangor from the steeple of the First Parish Church. From  
a photograph made in 1877.



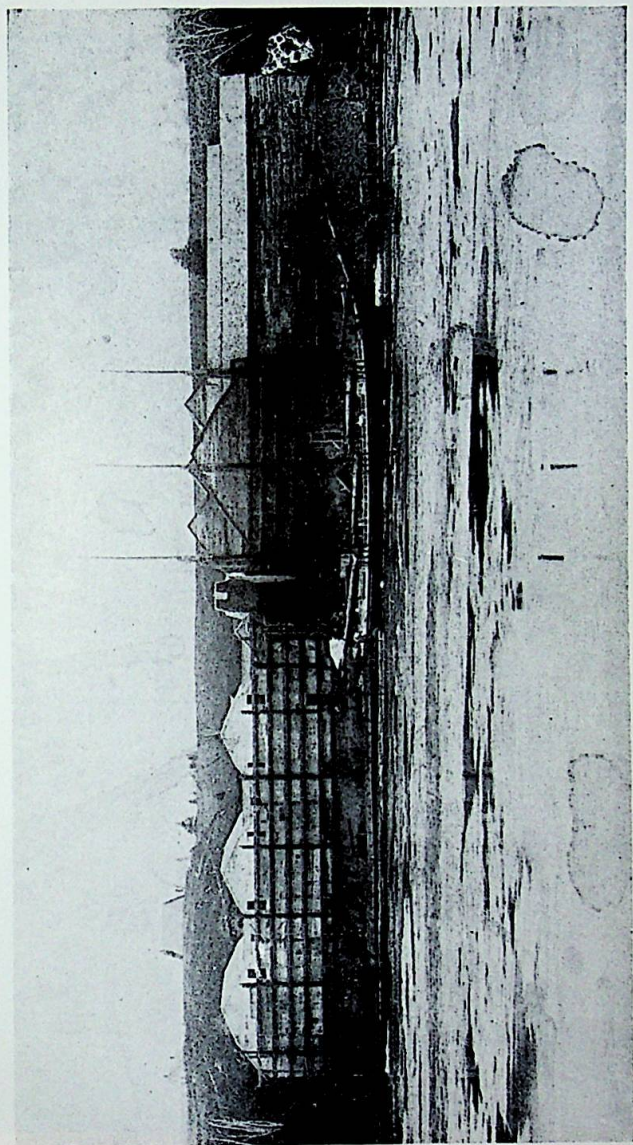
Penobscot River at Hampden, looking down stream from "High Head." General Crosby's long wharf in foreground. Photographed about 1890.





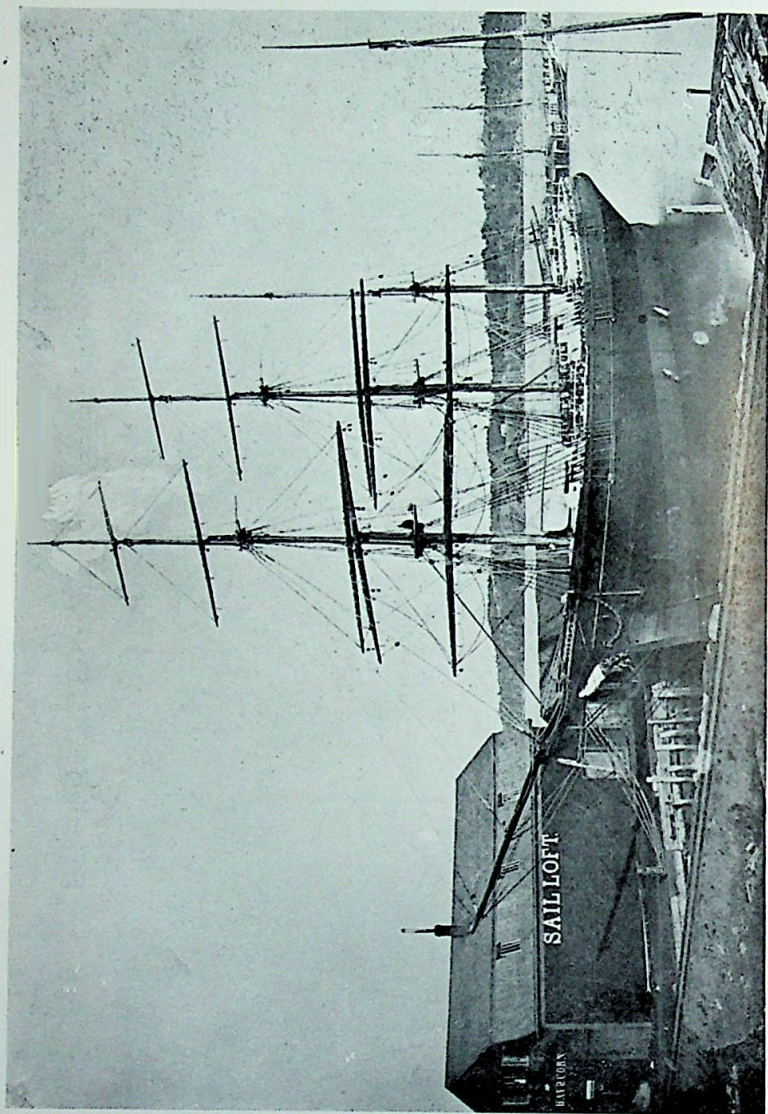
Orrington, Maine, from the Hampden side of the Penobscot River. At the "Lower Corner," near the Ferry. Photographed about 1890.





Dirigo Ice Company's ice houses at Hampden, Maine. From a photograph made about 1885.





Bark *Libertad* of Frankfort, Maine, 526 tons, built at Frankfort Marsh in 1864.



## THE NAVIGATION OF THE RIVER

the Bay is of great depth and in places the lead reels off several hundred fathoms before touching bottom.

Ice closes the once great lumber port of Bangor for nearly five months of the year, while it has been known to close as early as November 17 and not to open till May 1. This naturally caused much congestion of shipping during the short season intervening, and partly accounts for the unparalleled rush of craft up river, either under sail or in tow, all anxious to load lumber in some form at Bangor and, if coastwise bound, to make as many trips as possible.

Not to deal too largely with tables and statistics, it may be said that in 1860 there were 3,376 arrivals of vessels in this port,\* and, of course, as many departures in the short open season. The *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier* of July 14, 1860, reports the arrival of sixty vessels, all within the space of two hours, and all but one coming up river without the aid of steam. With regard to the number of vessels, this year represents the peak of the lumber trade, but that particular morning must have offered unusual assurance of a lasting "chance up river" for many vessels waiting in Fort Point Cove, Bucksport, etc.

The ship *S. E. Smith* cleared from Bangor for Liverpool, July 14, 1862, with 1,040,000 feet of lumber (deals), the largest cargo ever cleared from the port.

Domestic schooners and brigs were mostly engaged in the coasting trade, but there were, in later years, also many foreign steamers, ships and barks finding their way

\* Report of Ephraim Lansil, harbor master of Bangor, at the time



## SAILING DAYS ON THE PENOBSCOT

up the devious channel under the guidance of pilots. Besides many cargoes of "deals," as the English persisted in calling Yankee lumber, British craft carried much white birch spool-wood to Scotland, while Italian and Spanish vessels constantly loaded cargoes of shooks to be made into fruit boxes abroad. American vessels also bore many loads of lumber to South American ports.

A great part of the town's wealth, not invested in the vast timberlands of Northern Maine, was put into vessel property. Numerous shipyards flourished in Bangor and Brewer, just across the river, and here, as in most coast towns, the good old practice of "taking up" a vessel in shares was especially prevalent. Those able might own the whole or a large part of a vessel, but more often, newly built or purchased craft were owned on shares even down to a sixty-fourth, and thus people of very moderate circumstances could reap profit from what was for many years widely known as a most profitable business.

In 1873, the annual *List of United States Merchant Vessels* gave, as hailing from the port of Bangor, the names and tonnage of two ships, seven barks, thirty-one brigs, and one hundred and thirty-one schooners or sloops, besides at least a dozen tugboats and small steamers running down river daily to various places. These figures, of course, represent only a small portion of the craft engaged in the lumber trade, and which hailed from every New England port as well as from many others. Below Bangor, the river towns of Hampden, Orrington, Winterport, Bucksport, Stockton, and so forth, all built vessels and owned not only large fleets of coasters, but many



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square-riggers engaged in trade to all parts of the world. Even in the most remote foreign ports might be seen on the stern of some large ship the name of a Yankee village containing only a few hundred inhabitants.

Further congesting the already crowded and comparatively narrow river at Bangor, packed with lumber vessels and immense rafts of logs and lumber from many miles upstream,\* a great trade in ice developed. From small beginnings, in later years this became a very important feature of navigation on the Penobscot, adding much to the difficulties of threading a stretch of waterway on which groundings, foulings and disasters constantly occurred. Huge ice houses were built at Bangor and on the eastern bank of the river as far down as fresh water could be counted upon. As only the largest class of three- and four-masted schooners was employed, wharves must further narrow the stream by extending out far enough to allow of deeply loading such craft. In some cases, however, regular wharves were not built, their places being taken by so-called cribs, built many yards out from the shore and connected with ice houses by long chutes on which ice was hauled up after cutting and again shot down to load large vessels lying at the cribs. These were about fifty feet square, built of heavy timbers bolted one upon another, the space between being filled solidly with rocks. A ledge lying far out from shore could have been no greater obstruction, especially with a vessel lying on the outside

\* In 1863 the *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier* states that a raft of 122,862 feet came down river, the largest raft of sawed lumber ever run on the Penobscot.



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of cribs or wharves, and with the constant passage of these big craft, up and down river, the ice business certainly added one more terror to the over-crowded navigation of the Penobscot.

Artificial ice, however, made an end to all this trade. Every great ice house has now been torn down or burned, and the rotting remains of wharves and cribs, standing far out from the river bank and for years entirely out of sight at a little more than half-tide, to what navigation remains, are a greater menace than ever. One, in particular, opposite the town of Hampden, has "picked up" numerous motor craft and one small schooner loaded with pulpwood for a paper mill at Brewer, ran upon it and with receding tide, dropped by the stern till she filled through cabin door and windows.

In spite of sharp turns, mud flats, several ledges and narrows in which flood and ebb tide ran with great force, myriads of craft, however, found their way to Bangor under sail alone, and even making the run by night was no unusual thing.

Looking down Penobscot Bay on a fine summer day, after a period of bad weather in which Bangor-bound coasters had collected in various harbors, there was often to be seen a marine picture which, taken as a whole, was not to be equaled on the entire coast. To the left, the thickly wooded islands of the East Bay merged in a misty distance, while toward the center and on the right, rose as a superb background, the uneven forms of the Camden hills, towering to a height of fourteen hundred feet almost directly from sea level. During the summer the prevailing



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wind blew up the Bay from about south and especially in the afternoon it was likely to become quite fresh and on the ebb tide to raise a choppy sea which dotted the Bay with gleaming whitecaps. If not bringing in the bank of fog, often hanging outside, on such a day, wind and weather were ideal for the great number of unloaded or, as they were called, "light" coasters bound for Bangor.

Up the Bay they sped in almost endless procession, the last barely to be distinguished in the distance; mostly fore-and-aft schooners with sails in the picturesque position of wing-and-wing, but also including a goodly sprinkling of topsail-schooners, half-brigs, full-brigs and other square-rigged craft, each ploughing northward at more or less high speed, and each rolling under bow a mass of foam, or "carrying a bone in her teeth." Fast vessels constantly overhauled and passed slower and the speed of some was of no mean rate, for on the coast it was a well-known fact that given a free wind and plenty of it, light coasters frequently outsailed the largest schooner yachts of the day.

Adding variety to the lively picture, a few lumber-loaded coasters might often be seen close-hauled on the head wind, their impatient skippers tired of waiting for a favorable "slant" while at anchor in Fort Point Cove, and taking advantage of the strong ebb tide, were ready to accept the surety of a good "washing" involved in beating down the Bay under such conditions. Then, too, likely enough there was to be seen the black smoke of a tug returning to the river mouth after having towed down the East Bay and to sea some loaded foreign bark or ship. The westering sun lighted up with warm glow each swell-



## SAILING DAYS ON THE PENOBSCOT

ing sail and the flashing wings of gulls added touches to a vision of marine activity never to be forgotten and of which the present generation can have but the slightest conception.

Fort Point and its stumpy lighthouse being rounded, most of the vessels dropped anchor in the spacious cove on the northern side. Here, in Fort Point Cove, as at all other points on the coast where vessels were in the habit of anchoring, was constantly to be heard a familiar sound, perhaps above all others characteristic of the period. In early morning of a fine day with favoring slant of wind and the fleet hastening to make sail, the hoarse, memory-haunting crackle of blocks "talking," as halyards, pulled on by lusty hands, turned roller-sheaves and slowly raised throat and peak, together with the sharp click of windlasses heaving anchors short, were among the first sounds of dawn and rivaled crowing roosters in rousing slumbering residents on shore.

Anxious enough as masters of incoming craft were to reach Bangor and secure a good loading berth in the overcrowded port, even in those days of skilful seamanship, the hazardous trip up river was not too lightly to be undertaken. For vessels under sail a fair or southerly wind was essential, and southerly winds in summer had a well-known trick of "petering out" as the sun went down. For that matter, no southerly, at any time of day, however strong in the Bay and in lower reaches of the river, with the least certainty could be depended upon as lasting to Bangor.

Distance from sea and high land on both river banks



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too often played havoc with the wind, not only making periods of calm, but worse still, causing what was at one moment a fair and cool sea breeze, in the next to strike dead ahead and to come off the land in hot blasts, sometimes so violent that hurried taking in of light sails was necessary, and in frequent thunder squalls dousing of all sails and instant anchoring alone preventing the vessel from going ashore.

Flood tide was also highly desirable to start with, for in a sailing vessel, "bucking ebb tide and the will o' God" was apt to be slow music unless a strong, fair wind persisted.

A *Coast Pilot* issued in very recent years, said "Anchor anywhere in the river where a soft bottom is found," but this would have been poor advice in the old days of navigation and no experienced skipper for a moment would think of following it. At high tide the crooked "Bangor River" had several places of considerable width, but a great extent of mud flats and shoals rendered the channel itself quite narrow as the tide fell. Vessels of all sizes and rigs, some in tow and some under sail, the daily Boston steamer, and smaller steamers running from Bangor to all points in the Bay or near-by coast, but most of all to be dreaded, the long unwieldy tows of twenty or thirty loaded craft, lashed *three abreast*, coming down river from Bangor with a pair of towboats ahead, made the deep channel a most precarious anchorage ground at best.

Except through total failure of wind or under stress of some nature, anchor was not let go in the channel, and then only for the shortest possible time. On the whole, he



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must be a most obstinate, foolhardy captain, who, on this trip up or down the river, insisted over much upon any acknowledged rules of navigation. Though steam was supposed, under any and all circumstances, to give way to sail, upon meeting, often in most intricate spots, a ponderous side-wheeler or still more ponderous and uncontrollable tow of many loaded craft coming down river on the strong ebb tide, not even the most confirmed "sea lawyer" among skippers, in his sober senses was likely to stick for the rules of the road. A tow could be neither slowed up, stopped, nor in many cases swerved in the least from its downward course. Naturally there resulted lawsuits galore; but at the time, lucky he was who, on any terms, successfully dodged steamers, tows, other sailing craft and the many obstructions of this narrow waterway. Here, if ever, in navigation, the grim old maxim of the sea, "Hardest fend off," often reigned supreme.

From the somewhat one-sided though spacious and tideless shelter afforded by Fort Point Cove, there was, on the whole trip up river to Bangor, in the palmy days of the lumber trade, not one really safe anchorage. Even Fort Point Cove, greatly used as it was, lay rather exposed to the rake of easterly and south-easterly gales. Vessels sometimes lay there with both anchors ahead, and hung on by the "bitter end" of their cables, while cases of dragging ashore outright were not unknown. But such blows, in summer, were rare and the Cove long continued a focusing point for all waiting lumber craft, either light or loaded.

Often skippers bent on saving towage bills and sailing



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up to Bangor, would try to reach Bucksport, at least, while tide and wind still served. Once through the Bucksport Narrows, off the town of Bucksport, with high, wooded banks, famed as being extremely "bold to," great depth of water and swirling tide, the river widens noticeably and also takes a sharp turn to the westward. It also branches toward the eastward, runs several miles south and again joins the main stream. In this branch, flood and ebb run hard, so that Bucksport feels a double dose of tide.

The channel of the Penobscot is on the opposite side from the town and here drops to the most unusual depth of fifteen fathoms, but the river's quick bend west, together with a projecting point just above, makes, at least for many hours of the day, a decided and extensive eddy in comparatively shoal water, directly abreast of the town. This forms the anchorage ground, and the only one on the river where vessels could lie without danger from up and down navigation.

Yet it had drawbacks and dangers of its own. Vessels at anchor off Bucksport were bound to feel the effects of a strong circling, always uncertain tide, in the eddy, and to "cut and sheer," run over their anchors, foul them with turns of the cables, or even trip them outright from any secure hold on bottom. Fairly strong winds only made things worse, as craft were then likely to do more serious damage when fouling each other, and should both anchors be let go, in the hope of lessening this wild cavorting, a bad twisting up of cables was apt to result. In short, there were times when only a downright gale of wind would



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suffice to keep each craft well tailed off from her anchors and minding her own business.

Bucksport built many vessels and owned not only a large fleet of coasters but a number of square-rigged craft, many engaged in foreign trade.\* The town, too, was for many years noted as owning a numerous fleet of Grand Banks fishing schooners, known as "Bankers," and this business was continued long after Gloucester had absorbed it elsewhere. It was noticeable, however, that such vessels, when in port, made short use of the anchorage and at once hauled into the extensive line of wharves which once stretched along the waterfront. Among mariners in the lumber trade, the anchorage at Bucksport obtained an evil reputation as a "tide hole," and though glad enough at times to reach it, they were equally glad to leave it.

The many fine old houses in Bucksport and all other river towns, give mute testimony to the prosperity enjoyed in the old days of shipping and lumbering. In the remaining eighteen miles to Bangor are the towns of Frankfort, Winterport, Orrington, and Hampden, all formerly building and owning many craft of different sizes and rigs, some going offshore to foreign ports, but with coasters predominating. Abreast such towns, for various reasons and for as short periods as possible, vessels were

\* Master William R. Ginn, who died in Bucksport, April 29, 1868, at the age of 82, was the head of a great family of shipbuilders. He built two vessels at the Falls on Eastern River and then removed to Buckstown, in 1800, where he built several vessels. His son William, became a master builder, putting into the water about forty vessels, a larger number than any other man or firm have built in Bucksport, although his sons, Dudley C. and William H., built more tonnage.



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obliged to anchor in the strong current of mid-channel, and at turn of tide sometimes swinging directly across it, thus adding not only to their own risk but greatly to the frequent puzzling problems of navigation on famous "Bangor River."

At sharp turns of the stream several outstretching points ended in a series of huge boulders only exposed by falling tide, but always ready to pick up unwary craft. These boulders were by no means confined to points, and grim monsters of the sort, lay in wait close to the channel in several sections of the river. In later years some of the most dangerous of these menaces were removed through dredging operations, but many remained and do so to this day, although their exact location is known only to a fast-lessening few. It has been well said that from Bangor to the river mouth probably every foot of the distance has been the scene of a marine disaster in the shape of groundings, fouling of vessels, collisions and near or downright sinking.

The government has been most remiss in not sufficiently marking the many dangerous obstructions to navigation in the river. All through the most strenuous days of the lumber traffic, from slightly above Fort Point to Bangor, itself, Buck's Ledge, off the town of Orrington, alone had any sufficient warning mark. This ledge, lying almost in midstream and in what was at best a critically narrow reach, had on it a stout iron spindle which successfully withstood the heavy drift ice always borne down river by the furious tide of spring freshets.

The sight of the rusty iron spindle on Buck's Ledge



## SAILING DAYS ON THE PENOBSCOT

always brings to mind an incident occurring in 1882, the year of President Garfield's assassination, and on the writer's first trip up river to Bangor in his own craft. This was a thirty-foot, yawl-rigged yacht, which, being the first of the rig ever seen in these waters, called forth no end of jeering criticism from all quarters. For that matter, the rig was so much of a novelty on this side of the Atlantic that a New York magazine printed a full description of the craft together with a picture and scaled sail plan.

Under fresh southerly wind, the Bay and River had been ascended till near-night, fast-failing breeze, and ebbing tide caused thought of finding the best spot for anchoring. At this time a small Bangor-bound coaster was slowly passing close alongside. The skipper stood at the wheel, pipe in mouth, and after the usual pleasantries concerning what he was pleased to term "a hell-of-a-rig with an extry little mast for a cent," opined that we both would soon be obliged to drop killick. Then noticing a newspaper lying on top of the yacht's cabin, he asked, "What's the news in your paper?" "Garfield has just been shot," he was told. Taking his pipe from his mouth, he walked to his vessel's side and expectorated before casually saying, "Garfield! Who in tunkett is Garfield, anyway?"

It may be further recorded that a mile above Buck's Ledge we did anchor until 10:30 o'clock and then, with flood tide and the least revival of a breeze, again hoisted sail and proceeded. The weather soon became overcast and with near approach of a thunderstorm, the night grew so black that it was most eye-straining to keep mid-way between the high, wooded banks on either side and



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as great raindrops pitted the surface, and the church bells of Bangor pealed the hour of 2 A. M., the yacht made fast to a raft of lumber awaiting shipment by vessel in the crowded port.

It was a favorite tradition of the lumber trade that a full-rigged brig, being hard-pressed by wind and tide, once slipped safely through the narrow but deep gap intervening between the ledge and the rocky northern shore. Buck's Ledge, though well known as a most formidable obstruction to navigation and twice daily nearly concealed by water, had, at low tide, the same rural, dry and almost dusty look, common to the shores of upper "Bangor River."

Without a vestige of seaweed or marine growth, it is hard to imagine it passed by countless tons of tarry shipping and swept by a strong and here dangerously oblique tide, or how many hapless, seagoing craft have crushed both plank and salty barnacles upon it. A mile or so above, sometime in the eighties, the government tardily placed a spar buoy on the outer edge of a bad shoal, which reached half-way across the river and contained a great mass of concealed boulders. From here to Bangor, a distance of about ten miles, lay, in spots, what were well known to be, especially at low tide, the shoalest and most difficult parts of the passage, yet containing no guiding marks of any kind. Everything depended upon an intimate knowledge of the river, extreme caution, and withal, a full measure of good luck.

As though difficulties enough did not already beset the passage to Bangor, another danger was constantly grow-



## SAILING DAYS ON THE PENOBSCOT

ing and finally became such a menace that the government was induced to take a hand. From the earliest days every sawmill on the river (and they once numbered a hundred) was in the habit of dumping overboard refuse matter of every description. Not only sawdust by the thousands of tons went into the stream, but also bark, "edgings" and "slabwood," or the sides of logs trimmed off before being sawed into various kinds of lumber, and once considered worthless and thrown overboard as the easiest way to be clear of them. Just here it may be noted as a significant fact that these once considered worse than worthless "edgings" are now carefully saved by the remaining sawmills, often far inland, cut into stove-length and neatly tied in bundles, and brought to town and sold by wood dealers at a high price. Slightly defective lumber known as "scoots," at the time considered not merchantable, was also often thrown overboard from the mills or sold locally for a nominal sum. Skippers of lumber schooners frequently departed from Bangor, taking in addition to regular loads, private ventures of "scoots," either picked up adrift or secured for next to nothing. These were easily disposed of to much advantage on the route westward, and good-looking houses in coast towns many miles distant, were pointed out, with a grin, as being built entirely of "scoots" from "Bangor River." Often they contained better white pine lumber than is offered today at a dozen times their cost.

Sawdust and bark soon sank; nevertheless, untold quantities were swept down river by the usual current, aided by the rushing freshets in the spring. Edgings and slab-



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wood easily floated at first, and acres sped down river, through the sluice or over the dam at Bangor. Here, encountering adverse tides, continued progress down river was at times checked and vast quantities of sunken sawdust lodged not only in the channel but along both shores especially in shoaler water. Depth of water at the wharves in Bangor and Brewer at length became so lessened that dredging was imperative. At one point in the stream near Bangor, the steel rod, used in a preliminary survey, went down through thirteen feet of sawdust before reaching bottom. The disastrous effect of unrestrained dumping from mills continued with ever-increasing force for nearly a century and was by no means confined to the port of Bangor or even its immediate vicinity. For many miles down river rolled the scourge of sawdust, not only rendering the bottom insecure in cases of sudden, temporary anchoring, but increasing the extent of all shoal places, and constantly lessening the depth of water upon them.

Dredging operations, though long deferred, were of undoubted benefit, and at one point left an unmarked menace to navigation. In digging out and partially clearing the river channel of sunken sawdust, edgings and mud, all this soft material was towed in scows down river into the Bay and dumped in deep water. A little above the main settlement at Hampden was a notoriously shoal and narrow part of the stream. Here the channel was improved by taking out much solid matter in the shape of gravel, coarse stones and rocks, but instead of towing it away, three bars, or so-called "fingers," were built up, each reaching from the eastern shore nearly across the river and a



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hundred or more feet apart. This was done in an attempt to shunt the current of the ebb tide into the improved channel on the opposite side and so keep it clearer.

It was well enough intended, for the channel certainly needed bettering, but not in the way chosen by the engineers, who, in the minds of mariners, were often credited with making a bad matter worse. A single rocky barrier, instead of three, widely separated and half the time concealed, if built high enough always to show itself above water, would have been much more efficient as a tide shunt, were this necessary at all, and the stretch of obstructions up and down stream would thereby be lessened by two-thirds.

Left with no warning buoy whatever, the precise location and extent into the river of the outstretched "three fingers at Hampden," to many unknown, nothing could be devised better calculated to keep all but the most familiar navigators anxiously guessing during the time of tide above half flood or ebb. "Marks" for the dreaded fingers, made while they were fully exposed at low water, by taking careful ranges of certain permanent objects on shore, and passed by word-of-mouth from one to another, were most useful guides in helping mariners escape this fresh danger created at great labor and expense by a paternal government.

"Marks" for numerous other obstructions in the river, some a cherished heritage from the earliest days of its navigation, were also of great value. In passing, it may be said, that ranges since used by fishermen in locating favor-



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ite "grounds," account for the numerous Mark Islands upon the northern coast.

That even spruce and hemlock "slabwood" or "edgings," would, in time, become completely water-logged and sink, is proved by the fact that many shoal areas and flats exposed at low tide were covered with them, always well mixed with sawdust. The greatest extent of this mixture was, and for that matter, still is, to be found in Marsh Bay, about fourteen miles below Bangor. Much dredging of sawdust, etc., was done in removing this immense deposit from the wide but shoal waters of Marsh Bay, yet even now the channel remains narrow and notably crooked.

This so-called Bay is at the upper end of the reach and at high tide is over a mile in width. From Drachm Point on the northern side, acres of flats reached much more than half way across the river, though crossed at high tide by vessels of light draft with skippers sufficiently well acquainted with the shoal water. Drachm Point and an abrupt turn in the stream, here created, on the ebb tide, if not a true eddy, at least a large expanse of slack water in which seaward-rolling sawdust found a resting place and was deposited in untold tons. The always narrow channel through Marsh Bay became still more narrow and the depth of water on the "Point of Flats" still less, while at its extremity a warning buoy showed how greatly it had been built out into the river.

At low tide men loaded scows with rotted sawdust and sold the odoriferous deposit to farmers for manure, even at that day reaping some little benefit from menacing saw-



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dust. Floating edgings and slabwood, however, proved a much greater source of profit further up the river and until comparatively late years, the collecting of this particular drift material developed into a definite business. Quantities of it drifted ashore on both banks of the Penobscot and by land or water was carried to the nearest bit of smooth, shelving beach, where high above the tide it was stacked in great piles and formed a noticeable feature of river scenery.

Small schooners hauled into these loading places on some "high-water-slack" and lay headed down stream, taking on board not only holds full, but amazingly high deckloads, of driftwood bound for the famous lime kilns at Rockland. In making lime these kilns habitually burned immense quantities of cordwood; but driftwood from "Bangor River" was, by some, considered as making an even hotter fire and it found a ready market.

For a long stretch of years sawdust became, at least in Bangor, of some practical use. Much was consumed in filling the ice houses built along the river banks, but better still, there developed another business peculiar to the Penobscot River. Several large and otherwise especially well-suited schooners found that loading with the once despised sawdust actually yielded better returns than those given by average lumber freights. Cargoes of sawdust were taken to Boston and used by the great Tudor Company for packing ice in their fleet of square-riggers bound for Calcutta and other Far Eastern ports. Shipping ice across seas was a most profitable venture, even though on the long voyage it melted badly and the fresh water



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from it, together with the constant steaming of the cargo proved very injurious to ships. There were owners who refused to let their vessels carry ice at all, even on comparatively short trips from the Penobscot River to southern coast ports.

Much of the once regarded worthless refuse from the mills found its way down river to the Bay, and the shores of every island, including even Isle au Haut, thirty miles distant from the river mouth, were littered with driftwood in every conceivable form and of almost every variety of native wood, all bearing unmistakable marks of the saw.

Though vessels of all sizes and rigs carrying lumber in some form, were far and away the most numerous, certain other trades helped to make the Penobscot River to Bangor the most crowded stretch of waterway in the country. Many cargoes of brick were loaded at Bangor and at other points below. In the "Mink Hole," leading off Marsh Bay, there flourished the important business of shipping granite from the quarries of Mt. Waldo. Many large craft, deeply loaded with stone for the construction of well-known public buildings in cities further west and south, towed out of the sequestered "Mink Hole" and joined the tide of navigation down river to the sea.

On the other shore of Marsh Bay are to be seen the first definite signs of predominating salt water. A slight hint is given a few miles further up, where, near Winterport, the pale green of long, salt-water-loving sedge fringes small portions of the river shore, but in Marsh Bay patches of genuine brown rockweed, a scattering of barnacles on



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the rocks, and at times a whiff of salty air leave no doubt upon the matter. Here, at least within smelling distance, was good old salt water, with its glistening clam flats, ledges and rocky shores thickly covered with rockweed and kelp exposed by the tide.

Numerous sheltered spots on both banks of the river showed unmistakable traces of having been resting or camping places for Indians, who, in canoes of birch bark, came on trading expeditions from the wilderness above. Further down river and upon shores and certain islands in the Bay itself, great heaps of clamshells told where Indians once made prolonged stays. These shell heaps yielded many primitive implements, together with more or less broken pottery.

Along the shore, on lower reaches of the river and in coves of the Bay where shoal water and soft bottom permitted, long protruding weirs for catching salmon or herring existed, and in some locations were a serious menace to navigation. Weir poles made from bared trunks of young trees driven into the bottom, often reached a long distance from shore, and with brush strung upon them, were especially to be avoided by sailing craft with head wind.

When in operation or not broken down by ice, weirs plainly showed above the surface. But they were often abandoned, for one reason or another, and weir poles were habitually left standing for ice to snap in various lengths under water, though in violation of a law which was supposed to make it incumbent upon weir-men to pull up the poles when giving up any weir. Hidden poles of old weirs



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occasioned trouble in many quarters, and the sinking of at least one small lumber schooner was caused by grounding upon an abandoned weir while anchored in a frequented harbor.

Every spring freshet brought down stream a new lot of logs loose from some log-boom up river. They were all supposed to have the mark of the log-driving concern to which they belonged and many salvaged logs were thus identified and claimed by owners. Others escaped and went to sea, or were picked up by those living on the lower reaches of the river and shores of the Bay. It was noticeable how soon such prizes lost identifying marks by being cut into cordwood lengths and stacked on shore with other drift stuff; but a large number of logs were not salvaged and buffeted about by tide and wind, became water-soaked and partially sank. These nearly hidden dangers to navigation, with one end only slightly showing above water, formed the dreaded "tide walkers" infesting the river and to some extent the Bay. Sunken logs in any number were well known to exist in lodging places on the river bottom and out of strong currents along the shores. Many a time anchors have brought slimy monsters to the surface, while anchors of small craft have been known to foul sunken logs and for a long time to defy all effort of the windlass at "heaving clear."

"Tide-walkers" naturally increased in frequency as the head of navigation was approached, and also became more dangerous from the fact that in shoaler water the end was likely to rest on bottom. Ebb tide here being stronger and also somewhat longer than flood, "tide-walkers" were



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likely to be pointed down river and so were most dangerous to ascending vessels. With one end on bottom and the other only slightly awash, they were a warning to all mariners to keep a sharp lookout. At least one small craft coming up stream and luckily "light," struck a log in this position with such force as to stave in bow planking so that the vessel filled with water then and there. Coming up "Bangor River" under sail, in broad daylight, seems nowadays something of a stunt, but the once not uncommon practice of sailing up at night is considered by many a "tempting of Providence." A ship drawing twenty-eight feet of water has been brought to Bangor, of course under tow, but this was under exceptional circumstances.

Enough has been said of the Penobscot River, from the sea to the "head of the tide" at Bangor, to make it readily believed that this waterway was by no means easy to navigate, especially in vessels under sail. Obstacles were frequent, and greatly needed aids to navigation have always been sparingly furnished by the government. One of these essential markers was periodically provided through private means, and then regularly carried away by ice each winter.

With the wind either up or down stream, abrupt bends in the river, together with high shores, made frequent jibing of sails necessary, and this operation, especially in strong and squally winds, was likely to be attended by some mishap. To accomplish the feat of beating up or down "Bangor River," as was often done, first of all, a man should have under him what was known as a "smart" vessel, one quick and sure in stays, and preferably not too



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large. A "dull" craft, that is, a slow sailer, or a vessel in the least given to the mean trick of "misstaying," would invite trouble in these often narrow and crowded waters.

The skipper or someone on board must have intimate knowledge of the river. He must know to a foot just how far on either bank it was safe to stand in different locations and times of tide, and the extent of unmarked shoals and contrary running eddies must be no matter of guesswork. How best to take advantage of or to avoid strong eddies and tides in the river was no small part of the game, but with all conditions favorable, deeply loaded lumber schooners constantly left Bangor on the first of the ebb in the morning and beat down to anchor in Fort Point Cove before nightfall without starting a sheet.

In any "out-wind," from southwest to northeast, dense fog, that summer curse of the Maine coast, was pretty sure to be reckoned with, especially on the lower reaches of the river, and added greatly to the difficulties of navigation. "Fog mulls" in this region sometimes reigned for a week at a time, and though seldom reaching up river all the way to Bangor, men possessing that extra sense, known as "judgment in fog," had plenty of occasion to exhibit their marvelous powers.



## II æ Lumber Coasters and Other Craft

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PLAYING no small part in the number and variety of vessels navigating the Penobscot, were coal-laden schooners and brigs which visited Bangor by the score and afterwards returned west with cargoes of lumber. Compared with the huge coal schooners of later years, these were of small tonnage, but being small, so many the more vessels and trips were needed, for Bangor, once an almost exclusively wood-burning town, had, through its timberland and shipping interests, become a wealthy and most progressive city, using in various ways an astonishing amount of coal, both soft and hard.

Helping to increase the crowded condition of port and river were numbers of lime schooners constantly coming up from Rockland kilns to supply not only that fast-growing place, but much surrounding country. Cargoes of cement, iron, salt, grain, fish and other commodities, too



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numerous to list, also came up river by sail or tow, but many craft so laden left the main channel exclusively to lumber and discharged near to the mouth of the Kenduskeag River. This small tributary, always known as the "Stream," now blocked by bridges, joined the Penobscot at right angles and in so doing divided Bangor in halves, called the East and West Sides. At high tide, vessels could ascend the "Stream" a few hundred yards and leave cargoes in the very heart of the town, though lying nearly high and dry at low tide. The grain trade flourished here especially and if for only the length of time so employed, one schooner, at least, deserves mention.

The *Mary Willey*, in common with others, always loaded lumber for the passage west, but on the return trip stopped at Portland, Maine, where, direct from the elevator, her hold was quickly filled with grain for Bangor. Under the same captain, Cap'n Zach Williams, for nearly forty years the *Mary Willey* followed the same routine, until the expert skipper at last was caught by rocks and fog from being too well acquainted with the course. No one was more ready and even anxious than Cap'n Zach to give time and labor in helping other mariners out of trouble. On the northern coast, in every town on the Penobscot River, and especially in the port of Bangor, the name of the genial, white-bearded old skipper had, in many instances, become a household word.

Then, too, mention must be made of the beamy hay schooners which constantly loaded staggering deck loads of baled hay at River and Bay ports; loads often so high that the man at the helm could not see over them and on



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occasion was directed by shouted orders from forward. These vessels with their enormous deck loads covered by canvas, tightly lashed down, were as striking a feature of the river navigation as the lofty masts and yards of ships in tow, though perhaps attracting less attention than did the English steamers, also equipped with masts and yards. It was often incredulously reported that the English steamers had hulls built entirely of iron.

The sight of a hay schooner, besides being held by some as a good sign of rain, often recalled the dire fate of a hay-laden vessel named the *Royal George*. This craft, according to a frequently related story, on a trip to Boston met a furious thunderstorm with wind and rain, in which the canvas covering of her deck load was stripped off and during the long deluge following, the piled-up bales of hay absorbed such weight of water that the vessel became top-heavy and near Monhegan, "turned turtle." Probably few spinning the yarn were aware that in so doing the vessel emulated the action of an old namesake in the British Navy, which, soon after the disaster, induced Cowper to write the lines called, "Toll for the Brave."

Rounding a turn of the river just below town, there suddenly came to view such a veritable forest of masts and tangle of shipping as in like area of water probably could be found at no other port in the country. Two hundred and fifty sail of vessels have been known in the port at one time, and in this maze of shipping, lying tier upon tier deep on both sides of the river, could be seen not only craft of every known rig, but, among lumber coasters especially, some famed for great age, carrying, or sailing ability.



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For age, the schooner *Polly* built in 1803, easily took foremost place. Next in age came the *Good Intent*, launched in 1813, the *Hiram* of the same year, the pinky-stern schooner *Julia Ann*, of 1819, and the ancient red-painted *Radiant*, and slowly pacing her high poop-deck, the equally ancient-looking skipper and owner, whose patriarchal white beard reached to his waist. Most picturesque of the many quaint old craft was the schooner *John and Frank*, with living quarters below a high poop-deck, and still retaining under a carved, sweeping arch-board, two window-like ports in her lofty stern.

Always in memory most closely associated with vessels in the lumber trade and with the river front of Bangor, in the old days, was the fragrant smell of immense lumber piles, and the acute, aromatic odor of cedar shingles, often bunched in high deck loads. From a shingle-loaded schooner at anchor in some small harbor of the coast, during the too common, long "fog mulls," damp gusts of an out-wind wafted ashore the penetrating odor of newly sawed cedar shingles, a perfume reaching inland even beyond the pungent smell of low-lying wood smoke, pouring from the cook's galley.

Clumsy stern davits of wood were universal and tillers often served on fairly large craft though steering wheels of different design much prevailed. Such wheels, however, always included some combination of wooden drum with blocks and tackle on deck aft, well calculated for tripping unwary seamen. The windlass, too, was often of more or less primitive pattern and in weighing anchor, long wooden handspikes often slowly revolved a wooden drum.



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In the tiers of closely packed schooners, topsail schooners, hermaphrodite brigs, later known simply as brigs, and other now obsolete craft, might often be seen the veteran lumber schooner, *Elizabeth*, familiar to hundreds as the "Old Liz," but whose exact age was unknown. The writer's grandfather bought her as a topsail schooner in 1820, but she must have been along in years, for after repeated trips to the West Indies he "re-topped" her at his shipyard in Brooksville and she was among the first to enter the fast-growing lumber trade of "Bangor River."

Topsail and topgallant yards on the foremast, with square ports in the high stern, characterized the "Old Liz" for decades, though later they were abandoned. In her last years, when considered unfit for outside work and replaced by craft built yearly at the Brooksville yard, she began the shorter and smoother trips involved in carrying cordwood for burning in the rapacious lime kilns at Rockland. Even then it was time to condemn her, but as an act of charity the run-out "Old Liz" was given in charge of a superannuated "towney" whose life had been spent upon the water but whose family and home were gone. This old seaman, also badly suffering from an incurable disease, had for a crew an able-bodied, though lazy ne'er-do-well, and a feeble half-wit whose winters were passed at the town farm.

In mid-season the one man capable of much work, insisted that the craft be hauled up at the shipyard wharf, while he ostensibly got in his hay, though this was considered something of a joke. At any rate the skipper was



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obliged to concede and wholly realizing that upon the safety of the vessel depended his only means of livelihood he ran out, by actual count, eleven lines to the wharf and around large rocks on shore. Not content even with this, when the schooner was out of water at low tide, he secured a piece of chain from the lower rudder gudgeon to a spile of the wharf, while forward, a section of anchor cable lashed to the bob-stay, led to the wharf. To give a slight list inboard, the main boom was swung nearly "broad-off" over the wharf and guyed in that position. Under any other circumstances such unusual precautions would have brought forth many a laugh and jibe. As it was, men only looked at each other, perhaps smiled, but understood. Until the man's return the old skipper closely watched the vessel from tide to tide, taking in the slack of one line or easing off another, mending sails and repairing what rigging was within reach from deck.

The writer once tried an oil sketch of the craft in which the skipper was greatly interested. Several ratlines on the shrouds were hanging or missing, and as this defect was being strictly copied as a picturesque feature, the indignant old sea-dog exclaimed, "For God's sake, ain't you goin' to put in them ratlines?"

For three seasons, at considerable annual loss, the two owners of the vessel let the almost decrepit captain run kiln-wood to Rockland as the only means of keeping him "off the town." Rockland harbor at the time had no break-water and in storms, anywhere on the eastern board, was a notoriously rough anchorage. In one of these gales, after



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having been owned in the family for sixty-seven years, the "Old Liz" dragged both anchors ashore and laid her bones at the lower end of the harbor.

One other minor incident should be recorded in connection with the earlier days of the vessel. Between Brooksville and the town of Castine, only a mile opposite, there was much jealousy, especially as to the number of vessels built and owned in each place. Castine's vessels proudly displayed the word "Castine" as the hailing port and "Brooksville" was with equal pride painted on all vessels belonging there. At one time the number was about even, but then came a staggering blow to Brooksville. At Castine was located the custom house for the district, and like a bolt from the blue came a law requiring all craft within the district to hail from Castine.

It was a bitter pill to swallow but grudgingly, with the single exception of the "Old Liz," Brooksville-owned craft complied to the letter by painting out Brooksville and substituting Castine. The master of the *Elizabeth*, however, swore he would never erase "Brooksville" from the stern which had so long borne it, yet he followed the new law far enough to paint over it in crudely formed letters the word "Castine." The result was that neither was legible at any distance. As further illustrating the old feeling between the towns, a life-long resident of Brooksville, then eighty-three years of age, once remarked with evident satisfaction that he had never so much as set foot in the town across the river.

Not the least among the curiosities often pointed out in the crowded shipping, was a *rara avis* in the shape of a



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three-masted schooner, the *David Wasson*, built in 1867 by the writer's grandfather at West Brooksville, near the mouth of the Penobscot, and claimed to be among the first, if not the first, of the rig so common later, ever built in New England. Craft of this kind were at first known as "tern schooners," and though objects of much interest were not wholly approved.

Many old-timers of the fleet originally carried, in addition to the regular fore-and-aft foresail of the schooner, a square topsail and often topgallant sail with yards, though already in the most flourishing days of the lumber trade this rig was becoming somewhat uncommon. So almost universal was it, however, in the earlier days, that the term "schooner" implied it, and the new type was distinguished by the term "fore-and-after."

Closely connected with the foundering of the *David Wasson*, among the first three-masted schooners to load lumber in "Bangor River," was a strange coincidence. The captain's eldest son had been promised that when he was sixteen he should be taken on some long voyage with his father. The family lived at West Brooksville and the captain, a successful "off-shore" navigator, had taken up many shares in the vessel's construction. After several voyages the *David Wasson* was chartered for a cargo of lumber from Bangor to Curaçao, but on this trip the captain decided to take a vacation from sea life and remain at home. Accordingly the schooner was given in charge of a long-experienced neighbor, but the boy's sixteenth birthday coming at that time, he clamored for fulfillment of the promise and although at first opposed, finally pre-



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vailed and gleefully began preparations for joining the vessel at Bangor.

In the front yard of the captain's old house stood a flag-pole from which, upon occasion, the national colors were set. Before setting forth in the family carryall the boy ran up a small flag with strict injunctions that it should not be taken down until his arrival home, and on a fine day in August the vessel sailed.

A week after leaving she ran into a furious West India hurricane, was totally dismasted, thrown upon her beam ends, the deck load swept away, and with it every person on board. Three of the ship's company were lost including the captain's son. The four survivors succeeded in regaining the overturned, half-submerged hulk where for four days, without food and half drowned by the raging seas, they managed to cling. On the fourth day they were sighted by an English brig, taken off with great hazard, even in the subsiding gale, and carried to the port of Montevideo. Here, after a long wait, the American consul found passage for them in a sailing vessel to New York and eventually they arrived in Brooksville, bringing the only news of the vessel since her departure six months before. Then first developed the uncanny feature of the sad story.

The great gale raged up the whole coast and everywhere in New England was rated as an "apple shaker" of unusual violence. At Brooksville, the captain's wife lay awake that night with thoughts constantly on the vessel. Anxiously she noticed the ominous trembling of the stout old house, the fierce rattling of the blinds, the onslaught



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upon windows of rain driven in sheets, and the general turmoil of the great storm. At the first glimmer of daylight she rose, looked out and turned back, heartsick, for the flag halyards, loosened by the gale, had let the frayed flag come down to half-mast. She resolved, however, at once, to say nothing about the matter to her husband and this resolve was carefully adhered to. Intending to get out and run up the flag before her husband should notice its position, she was on the point of stealthily dressing, when he, too, quietly rose. Softly going to the window he gave one look and hurried silently down the stairs. With scanty covering against the storm, he hoisted the flag into its rightful place, all the while believing that his wife had not seen it.

So, for half a year, these two worried over the matter and hoped against hope, neither daring to mention it to the other until with the sudden arrival of the supposedly lost men it all came out. A careful comparison of dates showed that the same storm that wrecked the *David Wasson* and drowned the boy and two others of the town, fast traveled up the coast, and only a few hours later brought the flag at Brooksville to half-mast.

The rig of the three-masted schooner had at last come to stay and many such craft were soon built on all parts of the coast. With them came the desire for larger vessels and schooners with four, five and six masts appeared in succession. There was even a steel schooner built with seven masts, but she was generally considered a freak and was soon lost.

A three-masted schooner called the *Amora*, of 147 tons,



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was built at Ellsworth, Maine, in 1831. A somewhat smaller one, the *Fame*, was also built there in the same year, and the *Savage*, of 173 tons, was built at Eden, Maine, for Boston owners. These were, however, all of the topsail schooner variety, as it was long thought necessary to carry at least two square-sails upon the long foretopmast of all fore-and-aft rigged vessels, even sloops often being included.

This type of three-masted schooner proved unpopular for small vessels and for many years no more were built. The *David Wasson*, in 1867, was among the very first three-masted vessels in New England to discard yards entirely, and appear in the exact rig of the modern American, salt-water-built, three-masted schooner.

A small, three-masted vessel called the *Magnolia*, of entirely fore-and-aft rig, but with mizzen-mast much shorter than the others, as was the case with such craft built upon the Great Lakes, had already appeared upon the Atlantic coast, and with another called the *General Banks*, attracted great attention and not a little criticism. As the annual list of United States merchant vessels was not printed by the government, until 1866, and even then, by a strange omission, for several years contained neither building place nor date of building, such essential facts concerning these and many other old craft are now very difficult to obtain.

Numbers of Lake-built wooden vessels of different rigs were formerly brought around to the Atlantic coast and some placed in the all-absorbing lumber trade, though, as a rule, they were not thought entirely suitable. In their



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building, iron spikes took the place of white oak or locust treenails, and as iron soon rusted out in salt water, it was often thought necessary to refasten them with treenails, which operation badly cut up planking and frames not intended for such construction.

The model of their hulls, too, was generally considered as not filling requirements for work on the Atlantic ocean or coast. Often the hull was both narrow and shoal which, not without reason, was thought a poor combination. Frequently bare of figure or even billet heads of any description, with oddly placed deck houses of unusually box-like appearance and with certain peculiarities of rig, the lumber schooners of Lake origin could be recognized at any distance, and on this part of the coast were sometime referred to as "canal boats under sail."

Many were equipped with center-boards and these contrivances, though later common enough on the coast, in schooners both small and large, were at first viewed with suspicion by most seamen of northern New England. On the whole, to say that any vessel was "Lake-built" was no compliment.

The schooner rig of any sort was a peculiarly American innovation, and never found much favor with the English who dubbed vessels having heavy fore-and-aft booms, as "man-killers" and refused to acknowledge their many superior points. Another probable reason for the merchant schooners' unpopularity abroad was the difficulty in finding spars long enough for schooners except those of small size. In comparatively recent years an American three-masted schooner, not here considered of great tonnage,



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lost her foremast in a gale off the British coast. She was towed into port and it being impossible to secure a stick long enough to replace her foremast, as a schooner, she was converted into a barkentine and under this rig returned home.

Destructive work at sea and on the coast by Confederate cruisers put a decided damper upon the great business of exporting lumber from the Penobscot River, as it did upon our shipping in general. The Confederate steamer *Alabama* was especially feared and after this vessel had captured and burned the Bangor barkentine *Mark L. Potter*, this uneasiness as to what enemy steamers might do, naturally took on fresh impetus and became a downright scare among vessel owners and captains.

As it happened, the loss of the *Potter* came directly home and was of great moment to many of the writer's forebears. Captain Robert Tapley of West Brooksville, Maine, had married the writer's aunt and then spent every cent of his earnings in taking up shares in the barkentine *Mark L. Potter*, of which vessel he became master. Until sighted, overhauled, and compelled to heave to by the *Alabama*, he had done well with his command.

The notorious Captain Semmes of the Confederate steamer, at once announced his intention of burning the captured ship forthwith and ordered all hands immediately on board his vessel. On board the *Alabama*, he already had the crews of several burned Federal craft and curtly saying that no room was left, absolutely refused to allow the newcomers to bring anything but the clothes



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they stood in. On hurriedly quitting his stateroom, Captain Tapley seized from the wall a little daguerreotype of his wife, buttoned it under his coat, and with the others went on board the *Alabama*.

From her crowded deck and only a few hundred feet to windward, he saw the first smoke and blaze issue from the cabin of his vessel. Fed by tarry rigging and sails of cotton duck, the fire rapidly mounted to the topmost yard. So near a spectator to this sacrifice was Captain Tapley that the crackling of flames, the crash of falling spars and the sharp hissing of blazing fragments going overboard were sounds indelibly impressed upon his memory. When sure that the ship was beyond all possible salvage the *Alabama* steamed away either to land her prisoners some so-called neutral port or to transfer them to other vessels, and leave them to make their way home as best they might.

Captain Tapley later took charge of the Bangor brig *Rabboni* and later still, payment by England of the long contested Alabama claims enabled him to build at Bangor a fine ship, which was named for his wife, the *Hattie E. Tapley*. In her he remained for years, but when at his home in Brooksville, he was fond of exhibiting the faded daguerreotype and never failed to remark that it was the only known relic of the trim barkentine *Mark L. Potter*.

Semmes, a graduate of the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis, became a bitter enemy of the loyal States and seemed to enjoy doing all possible damage to Northern vessels. Even former personal friends were of



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no account and he once unhesitatingly burned a ship whose captain was a former friend and at whose house he had passed some time as a guest.

As may be imagined, the news of the sinking of the *Alabama* by the United States sloop-of-war *Kearsarge*, on June 19, 1869, in the famous naval duel off Cherbourg, was received on "Bangor River" with especial satisfaction. Yet how near this battle came to having a different ending was not generally known until the *Kearsarge* returned to America and was put into the floating dry-dock at the Kittery Navy Yard, where the ship had been built. A shell from one of the *Alabama's* rifled guns was then found embedded in the stern-post close to the waterline, but unexploded. Had it done as was intended the quick sinking of the ship would probably have ensued.

Although having no bearing on lumber coasting on the river Penobscot, a few words concerning Lieutenant-Commander Thornton of the *Kearsarge* may be excused. He was credited with sighting the eleven-inch, smooth-bore pivot gun which finally gave a death blow to the enemy ship and caused immediate sinking, so that the officers and men were obliged to jump overboard. When the *Kearsarge* was docked at Kittery, Maine, and it was found necessary to put in a new stern-post, Lieutenant Thornton secured a piece of the old one and from its live oak had made a stout cane which, duly inscribed on a silver band, is one of the writer's most valued relics.

Concerning the strange "works" of the schooner *Burmah* in years long gone by, it seems best to let an aged mariner and shipwright on the river relate the story in his



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own fashion. This man was a contemporary of the *Burmah* during most of her career, and a firm advocate of the sailor's common belief that "there's luck in wood and iron." He also held that while all vessels showed strong characteristics of their own, some were capable of behaving and did behave, at times, like sentient things.

"I want you should git this thing straight," he began, "and I guess likely at this day of the world I'm all the one round here that knows it for a fact, and not jest merely from hearsay-like. This here *Burmah* was a grand, good little hooker and would lug more thousand feet of lumber than anything of her bigness that ever I see. Her cap'n and me was townies down here to Islesboro, all through the fust of our goin', and for years after I'd allus see him about once in every so often, jest time enough anyways for a pipe and a few words o' gam along of him. He never once was tired of praising up the vessel; tellin' how she never would misstay or the like of that and how she never showed the mean tricks some vessels will if you ask 'em to do something a little mite extry-like.

"There's all the difference in the world betwixt vessels, you see, and the cap'n knowed well what he'd got under him. He went in the *Burmah* for years and made trips regular as clockwork, but there was no end of sickness in his family and doctors' bills kept him from never layin' by nothin'. In room of saltin' down a dollar for a rainy day, what with doin' for the ailin' folks, and keepin' up the vessel in some kind of shape, I misdoubted if he didn't go astern the heft o' the time. There was his reg'lar wages as cap'n, to be sure, and he'd made out to take up shares



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enough in the critter to hold his job, but it was a short season, and what he earnt summer times must have dreened away winters, for all the extry work he could pick up ashore. But he made shift some way to go it for quite a few years and paid owners fair dividends in spite of the little money he could squeeze out o' them for repairs on the vessel.

"Two or three women folks had got holt o' shares, and soon's ever it come to puttin' out money it was same's milkin' stones. For that matter, not a one of his owners knowed any too much in regards to vessel prop'ty, and seem to run of an idee that a vessel ought to go on allus and forever payin' dividends without ever once bein' repaired-up in proper good shape.

"It's awful poor policy, you see, to let a vessel git too fur run out. The cap'n is all the time scairt for fear of some-thin' givin' out aboard and don't take no chances of makin' a run. He's apt to lay in some little eel-rut of a harbor waitin' for jest sich and sich a favorable slant o' wind afore ever he'll fill away and try to make the next hole in the beach. So it takes a month o' Sundays to git anywhere and back home. Same time, the crew's wages is goin' on stiddy, grub bills are mountin' up and every namable kind of a repair bill to be paid almost every trip.

"There was years and years that the old *Burmah* never once come in home here without she had to go upstream to Holyoke's blocks at the Brewer end of the bridge or else be laid on his shore for repairs. They used to say how the cap'n kept a bunch o' shingles handy-by on board all ready to drive into slack wood-ends and butts every time



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the vessel was hauled on the beach, which was most every trip.

"It growed to be a reg'lar joke amongst folks along the water front. Quick's ever the *Burmah* hove in sight around the bend below here, bound home, somebody would sing out, 'There comes the old *Burmah* giving it to her for Holyoke's same's usual.' Then when she got up there, like's not some one of the men would call out, 'What's give out on yer this trip, cap'n? Garbards all opened up or jest merely the stern-post fetched adrift?'

"I worked up there to Holyoke's quite a spell myself, them days, but I never see no great sport in heaving slang at the cap'n, the way some of 'em done. Bimeby, though, there come a time when seem's though things had come to a head-like. The *Burmah* was one of the lookinest objects you ever see in the shape of a vessel still goin', with sails and riggin' pretty much of a piece. The cap'n told me himself that he was nigh scairt to go in her no longer without something was done. 'I rec'lect,' he said, 'that take it in any kind of a seaway she'd complain so bad that folks below couldn't hardly hear themselves talk, and till they got into smooth water somewheres she'd weep so free that two men workin' their dingdest couldn't give a suck on the pumps.'

"The cap'n allowed how it was hard work to keep a crew over a trip, for ye know stiddy work at the pumps takes the gimp plumb out of any sailor man the wust of anything. Well, sir, the upshot of it all was, them owners called three old cap'ns and Holyoke himself on a survey of the vessel up there at his place. I was the one to do the



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boring and the auger showed plenty of bad wood up under the run aft, but forrard around the bow lumber ports was the softest mess of all, as I cal'lated to find. The deck, too, was in bad shape and some of the deck beams were pretty much all gone. Come to that, the whole vessel had ought to be retopped and recalked all over. The sails were black with mildew and patched to beat creation. As for runnin' riggin', don't say a word! There was more stranded hal-yards than you could count, and the whole bill for repairs and refittin' out figgered up to nigh a thousand dollars.

"Of course that took them owners all aback and they vowed up and down they wouldn't never draw their wallets for no sich sum. You see it was a kind of poor time for coastin' anyways on account o' them rebel cruisers and est then the scare was on full tilt. The *Alabama* had burnt one Bangor vessel a'ready and folks was all upsot over the business.

"Then the cap'n of the old *John and Frank* writ home to his folks that he had gone into Newburyport so scairt that he dassent wait outside the bar for the tide to flow and give him full benefits acrost it. He let her go in a dite too soon and struck her keel a master clip on the North Breaker, too, but then was safe up to the town and wouldn't come out again for love nor money. He cal'lated to sell his cargo in Newburyport and winter the vessel acrost the river in Salisbury.

"So the *Burmah* owners concluded they'd full better give her up and next day had her towed a mile or so down river and beached close up in the bight o' the fust bend. That was called in them days 'the bone-yard' for con-



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demned old crafts, with the tide flowin' and ebbin' in 'em same's out of doors. When the *Burmah* was made fast to the one furtherest to the norrard, everyone cal'lated she was there for keeps. Nothin' was ever known to leave the bone-yard. Well, sir! seem's though they cal'lated to haul her a dite further ahead afore strippin' of her, and as the tides was puttin' up for a high run, they was in hopes of layin' her in exactly the right place maybe the very next day.

"But seem's like this wasn't to be—not by a jugfull! That night there come on an awful brush from the s'uth'ard, with rain and slate and wind enough to take all hell out by the roots. Godfrey mighty! Didn't she blow right out endways. The Boston steamer got the big washin' and cuffin' of her life and like to have rolled the sponson: off'n her 'fore ever she could make harbor there to Portland. Seem's if this was jest the very weather that suited the *Burmah* though. It was so late in the year that most vessels had loaded and left. Two of 'em anchored out in the river, ready for a tow down, dragged anchors in the sawdust bottom and was glad to tie up solid at the wharves again.

"That there *Burmah* went to work and parted her rotten old lines way down there to the 'bone-yard' and blowed over a mile up river straight alongside Holyoke's wharft on the Brewer side. It stuck out into the river only a little more than the vessel's length and if she'd went half a cable's length further she'd have fetched up agin the covered bridge, and then I guess there'd been 'hell to pay and no pitch hot,' sure enough.



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"The breeze o' wind up river jammed the schooner against the wharft so plaguy hard a yoke of oxen couldn't have budged her till the wind let up. We turned to right away though and run lines to her and soon's ever the cap'n showed up next mornin' he sent word to the nighest other owner. Natchally the whole thing set everybody's tongue a waggin' full tilt and it was called nothin' short of a reg'lar-built miracle.

"All sole alone on a dungeon-black night and in a livin' gale o' wind, that schooner had fetched away from the 'bone-yard,' blowed sideways more'n a mile up-river and placed herself along side Holyoke's wharft, ready to haul out, at a time when not a man in the town would for minute think of tryin' it on.

"I don't wonder it give them owners somethin' to mull over amongst theirselves. Well, finally they all held another long confab together and the cap'n, he stuck it out that payin' no attention to a plain 'sign' like that was a reg'lar fool thing to do. That's what plenty of folks besides the cap'n told them too. And then somebody else had told them the vessel was same's the singed cat we hear tell of—a sight better'n she looked to be, and well worth repairin' up.

"When the cap'n set down and proved conclusive that he could make out to raise the money for payin' his part in the bill, slap down-like, they finally swung 'round and that winter the vessel was hauled out and repaired up in fairly good shape. Anyways she lived to lug any God's quantity more lumber out of this river up to the west'ard



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and you can't make me believe that she wa'n't one of them crafts with pretty much all the knowin' of a human."

There was always much talk concerning the failings and peculiarities of various vessels in the fleet.

"That little *Dayspring* sprung her main boom coming down along from Boston, and they had to stop over in Townsend and fish it with scantling stuff. Must been in consid'ble poor shape, anyways, for everybody knows that the *Dayspring* is tender sided and won't bear any great carting on of sail. By good rights, she ought to lug quite a jag of rock ballast in her all the time to keep her on her legs.

"But did you hear tell about the old *Minnesota*? She'd call for a man at the pumps the heft of the time for the last few years, but seem's though she got the best of 'em altogether on this last trip to the west'ard. She filled up on 'en complete abreast York laige, and went into Kittery cove with the men living atop of the deck load. There you have another big bill of expense, besides a season's work gone straight up Salt Crick.

"She's got to discharge and go on the railway for repairing-up, if they don't turn to and condemn the old basket outright. Come to that, she'd ought to been give up long ago."

Some vessels were notoriously hard to steer. Two men were exchanging views concerning the *Izetta*, a large, Bangor schooner, known for poor steering qualities, on which both had seen service. Said one: "You come to take that schooner running free in a fresh breeze and she'll act for all the world same's if she'd been loaded way 'by the head."



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No two men can ketch her with the hellum so quick but what she'll make a regular S of her course." "You're right," agreed the other, "and if the contrary old brute didn't make an O, it wouldn't be for lack of trying good and plenty."

Some vessels were in evil repute for having a tendency to misstay, unless handled in a particular manner. When about to tack ship, immediately after the order, "ready about," the flying jib must be hauled down and the jib sheet eased off. Then, when the helmsman shouted, "hard-alee," and put the wheel down, men must be ready with a tackle to gather in every inch possible on the main boom, as the vessel came into the wind, and thus help the turning process. Needless to say, such vessels were not likely to attempt beating up or down "Bangor River."



### III æ Skippers, Mates and Sailors

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A UNIQUE feature of lumber coasting was the proportion of skippers, mates and even men, who owned farms on the near seacoast, and who only went coasting during the short season of lumber carrying that ice permitted on the river. It was far from being an unusual thing for a captain to "hang up" his vessel in some small harbor while he got in his hay or, very likely with help from his crew, performed other pressing farm duties.

Among vessels lashed together in tiers at Bangor there was every chance for frequent "gams" among skippers or crew. Talk, while dealing largely with maritime affairs and especially with the price of lumber "freights" to different ports, also had much to do with subjects strictly rural. The possible merits of a newly invented mowing machine drawn by horses, rumors of a newfangled churn, the laying qualities and milk-giving powers of certain breeds of hens



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and cows, were continually under expert discussion. It was this queer combination of sailor and farmer, so common in the lumber trade, that in some seaports caused these men to be jocularly dubbed "cow-yard tars."

Since the very earliest days of navigation, wood carving has always played an important part in decorating ships of all countries. To a lessened extent it survived even on Yankee schooners engaged in the prosaic lumber trade. While figureheads in human forms chiefly adorned large vessels, more or less elaborate billet-heads, trail-boards, quarter-boards, arch-boards and often extensive stern carvings, all liberally picked out with gold leaf, brightened the closely packed fleet of coasters at Bangor. Here it may be fittingly mentioned that in those days there lived in the town one Thomas Seavey, a ship carver of far more than local reputation, whose excellent work in that wood of original native growth known as "pumpkin pine," was borne on prows and sterns of American ships to all parts of the world.

Further tending to enliven the waiting fleet was the great number, variety and color of bedding and clothing, constantly fluttering in the breeze while hung to dry on many vessels. Everywhere sails shaken out and half-hoisted on masts or loosely dropped from yards, hung airing in the hot sun and bright colored flags always caught the eye, blowing out from large ships of various foreign nations, lying at the wharves.

The fact that limitless fresh water was so easily to be had, evidently was fully appreciated, especially as numerous coasting vessels had on board the captain's wife and



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often children. Nor should mention of noisy dogs and home-like cats be omitted in recalling the strangely mixed gathering of men and vessels so commonly seen in "Bangor River."

The amount of music to be heard on fine evenings, among the vessels, was especially striking, though crews had good reason for being dog-tired after a long day's work at loading lumber, much of which came wet and heavy, direct from rafts in the river. But on evenings and holidays were often sung and played ditties or jigs whose ancient origin was generally unknown; yet more up-to-date "broadsides" also had their admirers. These were printed ballads mainly consisting of doggerel upon a manner of subjects, set to well-known airs and regularly hawked about the streets or waterfront. At a cent apiece, they found a good market in the fleet.

Quite often broadsides commemorated the loss of some vessel, the quick trip, big fare of fish, or remarkable experience of another, while harrowing lines, depicting the dreadful death or hair-breadth escape of a lumberjack or river driver in the great northern wilderness, had much appeal.

So many of these ever popular ballads and songs had conventional beginnings in the words, "Come all ye," that the whole class came to be generally known among seamen as "Comeallyes." Singing these quaint lyrics to the accompaniment of the ubiquitous accordion or, sometimes, to the fiddle, was a never-failing amusement on board coasters or fishermen. Among such craft a good singer of sentimental "Comeallyes," occupied the high position



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often held by a gifted chanty-man on square-riggers, even long before the fabled era of clipper ships.

Pleasure barges also added their bit of color and confusion to traffic on the river. This popular mode of navigation was at its height in the great campaign year of 1860. The pleasure barge *Fairy of the Wave* was launched June 30, 1860, at Isaac Dunning's yard, in Brewer, having been built by James Dunning for Pendleton and Ross. She was 100 feet by 22, with a house seven feet high and would accommodate from 1,000 to 1,500 persons. On her first trip she was towed down river by the steamer *Nautilus*, decorated with flags and bunting and carrying the Bangor Cornet Band on board. At this time the Bangor "Wide Awakes" were active on land and sea, fighting for the nomination of Abraham Lincoln and their local favorite, Hannibal Hamlin. The *Fairy of the Wave* was chartered several times by the "Wide Awakes," for campaign trips down river, combining social and political joys. Colonel John Goddard's splendid new steamer *Governor*, designed for opposition to the Sanford Lines on the outside route, was impressed into the pleasure trade during this year and carried her cargo of "Wide Awakes" on numerous trips down the River and Bay.

Some vessels in the fleet were sure to be pointed out as "Jonahs." Nothing worse could be said of any craft than that she was and always had been a "reg'lar-built Jonah." Men were killed or badly hurt at building or launching; of course she stuck on the ways at the latter, and more than likely some rigger fell from aloft while helping to fit her for sea. She might have proved an able vessel in



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all respects, but bad luck, in the form of scrapes innumerable, always had and always would attend her. The sinister reputation of being a "Jonah," was everywhere spread among coast folk, and if offered for sale, after "dreening the wallets" of different owners, the price must be extremely tempting, while some would not even take such a craft as a gift.

But the unenviable reputation of being a "Jonah," was not alone confined to vessels, but for one supposedly good reason or another, not infrequently extended to individuals. Many a steady, able-bodied man was refused employment because he was known to be or was suspected of being likely to "Jonah" the ship. It does not follow that the real reason was always given, but, all the same, nobody well-posted wished his services on board.

The sailor's old belief that there was "luck in wood and iron" had strong hold and often refused to be downed. Among vessels, for many years carrying lumber out of "Bangor River," almost exclusively, were at least half a dozen schooners hailing from a small port in New England, where, in certain families, superstition survived to an extent that brought the days of Salem witchcraft to mind. One of these craft, especially well known in Bangor from the number and regularity of her visits, never failed each spring to observe a custom dating back to the earliest days of coasting or fishing, and though in later years all others were perhaps not quite so scrupulous in following this ancient rite in particular, still it may serve as an example of the many superstitions prevailing in the town and in some form or degree along the coast.



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After wintering at her home port, the skipper and crew of the vessel did necessary calking and painting, "rove off" new running gear when needed, bent sails, took on board provisions, filled water casks and otherwise fitted out for the season at a wharf. Then hauling off into the harbor, she waited at anchor for a good day and favorable slant of wind. But whenever starting on the first trip of the year, regardless of the wind's direction, and sometimes with much extra trouble, she "filled away" from anchorage toward the *north*. Thus complying with the old-time rule of "Fill to the north'ard for good luck," the vessel left for Bangor with every reason to expect a prosperous season.

Other means of tending to insure good fares for fishermen, with good freights and freedom from mishaps for coasters, extended from early times well into the palmiest days of the lumber business of "Bangor River." A certain woman, renowned for ability to control weather and to furnish general good fortune to seafarers, lived alone a mile or more back from the shore. It was well worth while to keep Aunt Polly supplied with tea, tobacco and snuff, to buy of her heavy knit stockings, mittens or "nippers," and to see that her woodpile never unduly diminished. Trips up to Aunt Polly's small dwelling, with offerings given and purchases made, often preceded trips to the Grand Banks or to Bangor. Quoth a man, later engaged in the less strenuous business of keeping a hotel, "Maybe there wa'n't nothin' so very much in it, but to the last day of my goin' coastin' to 'Bangor River,' I always kind of felt better-like when things had all been fixed up good and plenty with old Aunt Polly."



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One of the most common forms of superstition on vessels was a decided aversion to bootjacks on board, though in those days these simple devices were often sorely needed. From the copper-toed, red-fronted boots of early childhood to the stiff, knee-high specimens worn by men and especially blacked for Sunday, males wore boots of some variety, and either wet or dry, getting them off, even with a jack, was often a matter of difficulty. Nevertheless, bootjacks on board fishermen and many coasters were strictly taboo as being morally certain to bring bad luck. Should a bootjack ever inadvertently find its way on board, the only known way of forestalling its malignancy was to replace it as quickly as possible in the exact spot from which it had been taken, whether that spot be a nail, a drawer or from under glass in the best room.

Turning a hatch cover upside down was universally considered to be a bad omen. Whistling was apt to fetch on a gale of wind, and there were skippers who held that driving a nail on Sunday had the same effect. Horseshoes fastened on bowsprit-ends, always in position to "hold the luck," were to be seen on half the vessels.

On some craft red mittens, stockings or mufflers were not for a moment to be tolerated, and must be cut into shreds at once and thrown overboard. Though rats were a great nuisance on many vessels and an abomination, the old dread, common to seamen of all countries and ages, of seeing even a single rat leave the vessel by running ashore on some line to the wharf, never held greater sway than among the lumber vessels of "Bangor River."

There were many other superstitious beliefs, not uni-



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versal, but confined to vessels from different localities, or sometimes alone to certain skippers. The violent prejudice against blue paint was not shared by all, yet on some vessels blue-colored hatch-combings, rails or deck trimmings of any description had much the effect of a red rag to a bull. A man once shipped as a member of a vessel's crew, but almost on the instant of coming aboard, swung his bulging canvas clothes bag again over his shoulder, and turned to leave, declaring with even more profanely picturesque language than the occasion called for, that on no account would he risk going a foot to sea in company with blue paint so freely displayed on all deck trimmings.

One veteran skipper, however, lost no occasion to scoff at the supposed poisonous effect of blue paint upon a vessel. Since boyhood he had gone coasting, but having regular business elsewhere, he had not sailed up "Bangor River" till long after the high tide of lumber coasting had ebbed. Being a man of well-known strong convictions, and withal, having a tendency to take the off-side of many questions, in the controversy over blue paint he was especially prominent. During his half century in the coasting trade he had owned and commanded three different schooners, on all of which blue paint had been used with unusual lavishness. Not only hatch combings but hatch covers themselves were blue; rails and pin-rails were blue; a blue band decorated the white sides of the cabin trunk and numerous objects on deck were fantastically touched up with blue. But not content with so far showing utter fearlessness of blue paint, the mastheads of every vessel ever commanded by this famous skipper were distinguish-



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able in all ports by being painted blue instead of the conventional white. No seaman on the northern coast has had a longer nor, on the whole, more fortunate career than he. Whatever pet superstitions Captain Parker Hall may still entertain, aversion to blue, on a vessel, has definitely been proved not to be one of them.

Among seagoing men, as well as shipbuilders themselves, no superstition has ever been more persistent than the belief that anything stopping a vessel's progress down the ways at launching, foretold continual bad luck. Should the craft escape serious damage and finally be successfully floated, even then she had earned the stigma attached to "sticking on the ways," and no amount of success in her subsequent career seemed to have any effect on the ancient superstition.

Probably the best instance of a craft which more than made good after a most unpropitious launch, was that of the United States Frigate *Constitution*, later popularly known as "Old Ironsides." She was built at the yard of Edmund Hart, on the spot where Constitution Wharf now stands in Boston. The first attempt at launching was made on September 30, 1797, but settling of the ways hung her up in a precarious position requiring much blocking and shoring up with heavy timber, till a second attempt could be made several days later. This also failed to move the vessel and it was not until the third attempt, on October 21, that she was finally floated. According to all predictions, the *Constitution* should have proved an unusually unlucky ship, but in fact she turned out to be the most phenomenally lucky vessel of the young navy. In the War



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of 1812, besides capturing several of the enemy's ships, she ran the blockade of Boston no less than seven times and in a three-days' chase escaped from a large British squadron, for which feat Congress awarded her commander, Isaac Hull, a gold medal.

From early days Bangor had steam communication with Boston and later with other ports. The *Bangor*, which was said to be the first iron screw steamboat built in America, plied for a time upon the river, and though of very small tonnage, was regarded as a great curiosity on account of her build. Then increasing in size, paddle-wheel liners succeeded, though all built of wood. In 1907 steel, twin-screw steamers arrived on the route. It was, however, noticeable that, though more than twice the size and power of earlier craft, owing to shoals in the river their draught of water remained about what it was over half a century ago.

The old side-wheelers were in many respects of much more picturesque appearance. They had two masts with fore-and-aft sails upon them, together with massive "hog-frames," enormous wheels and paddle boxes, while towering above the hurricane deck, fully exposed to view, was a great, slowly tilting "walking-beam" which caused the huge paddle wheels to revolve with a slight decrease of motion between strokes of the piston. During still days on river and bay or with a favoring breeze, the peculiar uneven spank of the paddle wheels could be heard for miles.

In the July 2, 1860, issue of the *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier*, the following packets are advertised as making regular trips from Bangor to Boston and New York:



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"BANGOR TO NEW YORK. Schooners: *Abbie E. Willard*, *Defiance*, *C. A. Farnsworth*, *Hannibal* (carrying corn, flour and general merchandise), Farnsworth and Fanning, agents in Bangor."

"BANGOR-BOSTON DISPATCH LINE OF PACKETS (Leaving north side Central wharf, Boston, for Bangor, every Wednesday and Saturday). Schooners: *Adeline Hamlin*, *Connecticut*, *Express*, *Saxon*, *Shawmut*, *Iowa*, *Eclipse*."

"SAILING REGULARLY FROM PACKHARD'S WHARF, BOSTON. Schooners: *Julia and Mary*, *Globe*, *Hepzibah*, *S. R. Hart*. (Bangor agents: Thurston and Metcalf)."

The "good sloop *Resolution*," advertises for parties for Mount Desert. Apply to F. Garland and Company, Exchange Street.

Penobscot river steamers advertised regular trips between Oldtown and Winn, leaving Oldtown every morning, except Saturday, or on arrival of morning "train of cars" from Bangor. Arrive Winn the same day. N. W. Hartwell, agent, Oldtown.

"FOR PORTLAND, BOSTON AND LOWELL. Steamer *Forest City*, Capt. Samuel Blanchard. Leaving Bangor, Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 6 A. M., touching at usual landings on river and bay, and connecting with cars at Portland for Boston and Lowell. No camphene, burning fluid, matches or other hazardous freight taken. Fare: Bangor to Boston and Lowell, \$3."

"SANFORD INDEPENDENT LINE. Leave Bangor for Boston, Mon. and Thurs. at 11 A. M. Arrive Boston every Tues. and Fri. Leave Foster's South Wharf every Tues. and Fri. Evening at five. Steamer *Daniel Webster*, Capt. Samuel



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Blanchard. Well known and superior steamer, *Menemon Sanford*, Capt. E. H. Sanford, 1000 tons burthen."

Collisions, near collisions and bad mix-ups between sailing vessels and the many steamboats once on the river and bound westward, were a frequent occurrence. Especially at night and in thick weather, steamboats were the constant dread of those on board lumber coasters, and among such many stories were told, supposed to illustrate not only the carelessness of steamboat men but the casual manner in which even serious collisions with sailing craft were often treated.

One anecdote, based upon an actual occurrence, was of a Bangor man well known to be deeply interested financially in the line of Boston-Bangor steamers. He was returning to Bangor on his favorite boat, which craft it may be said, had acquired an especially sinister reputation among sailing vessels. She had reached a spot about half way up river to Bangor and the great man was at a late breakfast when the whistle blew violently and a severe shock was felt. He hurried on deck. "What's the trouble now?" he asked the captain. "Oh, we've run down another schooner, sir," was the answer. "She undertook to tack ship right under our bow." "Where is she? I don't see any vessel," he said. "Part of her is on bottom back here to port and the rest is somewhere off here on the other side," the captain replied. "Good! That's the talk! Cut 'em plumb in two while you're about it," said the steamboat owner, turning to resume breakfast.

The full humor of the situation was most appreciated by crews and owners of sailing vessels when it turned out



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that the sunken schooner was bound for Bangor deeply loaded with coal consigned to the steamboat company and just then much needed.

In view of conflicting authorities, it seems only safe to say that the Boston-Bangor Line, if not dating back to 1824, as by some claimed, was, at least, among the very first of the regular steamboat lines to be established in the country. It is further notable for having had built, in 1845, the first iron-screw seagoing vessel, a craft of 230 tons, whose brief career on the Line is elsewhere mentioned.

The route from Boston to Bangor always called for a vessel possessing qualities which it was impossible to combine in any one craft. From Boston, nearly to the mouth of Penobscot Bay, the route lay entirely exposed to the Atlantic ocean with wild weather always to be expected, though especially at certain times of year. This by good rights, required a really seagoing steamer, of a type which could not ascend the Penobscot River, to quickly run freight ashore at the various landings, and to reach Bangor at the lowest stage of tide.

This most important section of the route had, of necessity to be served by a wide, shoal-draft vessel, carrying all freight on the main deck, ready for quick delivery at the different Bay and River towns, and built high with cabins for passengers. Low, overhanging sponsons and guards extended on each side to the full width of the enormous paddle-wheel boxes, and made the deck and most of the top of the vessel many feet wider than the actual hull, which feature alone rendered the craft unfit for any outside work.



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This, however, was the type of steamboat which, "weather permitting," managed to ply on lines to Bangor, at one time existing from Boston, New York, Portland and other places. That they did so was wholly owing to great care in not leaving port in the face of threatening weather and, if caught by a storm of any severity, to the promptness with which they made a safe harbor on the way.

The captain of a Boston-Bangor steamer, himself formerly in command of a sailing ship, once candidly, though by no means publicly, expressed his opinion concerning the seagoing qualities of the steamer in his charge. "She is," he said, "only fit for smooth water, and my greatest care is not to get caught out with her on the first part of this route. If I do, it means getting in out of the wet at the first chance, and favoring her in every way, shape or manner. Once let a sea strike with full force under these infernal sponsons and it would start off the whole top hamper."

These words were vividly recalled when a few years later, the same steamboat, though under another captain, during a northeast gale, crawled into the lower harbor of Portsmouth, N. H., and came to anchor with seven feet of water in her, and as sorry a lot of badly scared passengers as ever clamored to get on shore. A big sea had got in its work on one side, just forward of the paddle box, and through a great hole in the shattered top, water rushed off on the main deck, soon flooding the coal bunkers. In the desperate effort to keep up steam and save the vessel by reaching harbor, every article of freight which could give out heat had been burned. The vessel



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was repaired, strengthened by iron truss-work below decks, and again put on the run, but this occurrence, together with the subsequent loss of the Boston-Portland steamer *Portland*, with all on board, did much toward discrediting the use of smooth-water paddle-wheel steamers on the exposed coast of Maine.

The steel, twin-screw steamers that were on the Boston route after 1907, though necessarily of shoal draft, were more of marine hull construction and free from overhanging sponsons on the side, and were better sea-boats than the old side-wheelers. It still remains, however, a stubborn fact, that it is impossible to make any one style of craft perform competently on the full extent of a route embracing such widely different conditions. These newer vessels for some years were hauled up in the winter season and passenger service discontinued. A thoroughly sea-going propeller brought freight as far as Winterport, if ice permitted, and it was then shipped by land to Bangor.

Of the numerous other passenger steamers, large and small, once flourishing on regular lines between Bangor and various points on bay or coast, not one now remains. One after another, they have been forced to succumb to the ever-increasing use of automobiles, and owing to the same not wholly unmixed blessing, excursions down river on commodious barges towed by tugs, are wholly unknown.

With the exception of a very few small motor boats, all forms of recreation upon the river have long been abandoned. No community, once so notably given over to canoeing, rowing and water trips in general, ever under-



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went a more complete change of sentiment, for as a source of pleasure to most inhabitants today, the Penobscot River, with its many beautiful vistas, might as well not exist.

Extreme freaks in marine architecture, in the old days, were schooner-rigged scows, mostly developed in the exigencies of the rushing lumber trade, and probably the cheapest hulls of coastwise-going craft ever leaving launchways in American shipyards. Not even our Provincial cousins could have given any points on this score. These fully-equipped schooners in rig, with hulls of scows pure and simple, though not rated as sea-going, often carried immense loads of lumber to Boston or intermediate ports, and paid, while they lasted, good dividends on shares taken up.

Deep loading was, as a rule, in the lumber trade, carried to an outrageous extent. Without doubt the late Mr. Plimsoll, M.P., made his definite mark in the English shipping world, but could he have seen the overloading of vessels common in "Bangor River," he might have thought his labors were even more needed on this side of the Atlantic. The precise spot on the vessels' sides where the well-known "Plimsoll mark" would have been affixed, had such a law existed in this country, was habitually beneath the surface.

A "crooked" vessel, that is, one with much sheer, was often loaded so that though on an even keel, water stood several inches deep amidships, directly across the deck. Partly responsible for this was the reassuring fact that a lumber-loaded craft would not actually sink to the bottom even if completely water-logged, and many such



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vessels have reached some sheltering port, under their own sail, with hulls submerged and the helmsman standing knee-deep in water.

Then, perhaps, another consoling fact was not wholly forgotten. A vessel however deeply loaded in fresh water would, on reaching more buoyant salt water, float noticeably higher. At any rate, alarmingly deep craft continued to be towed down "Bangor River."

As may be imagined, the position of harbor master, on "Bangor River," was no sinecure. First of all, a reasonably clear channel must be kept in midstream for the Boston steamer, other smaller steamers, towboats arriving and departing with long tows, schooners going or coming under sail and, last but not least, the constant sculling and warping of lumber rafts used in loading vessels and logs for the mills. Any permanent anchoring in the river was out of the question. Anchor might be let go but only to "snub up" and hold arriving craft till lines could be run to one side or the other and the vessel hauled out of the way as soon as possible. Every foot of space counted and, at the harbor master's order, yards were "cock-billed," and even anchors removed from catheads at the bow and more snugly hung straight from the hawsepipes.

So-called "long-lumber" came in rafts and was laboriously hoisted into the vessel's hold through lumber ports cut in both bows. Before sailing, these ports must of course be closed, well fastened and again calked up with oakum. Though a necessity in the business, these square ports were not only a disfigurement, but in fresh water a source of ultimate trouble. Ordinarily the first sign of decay in



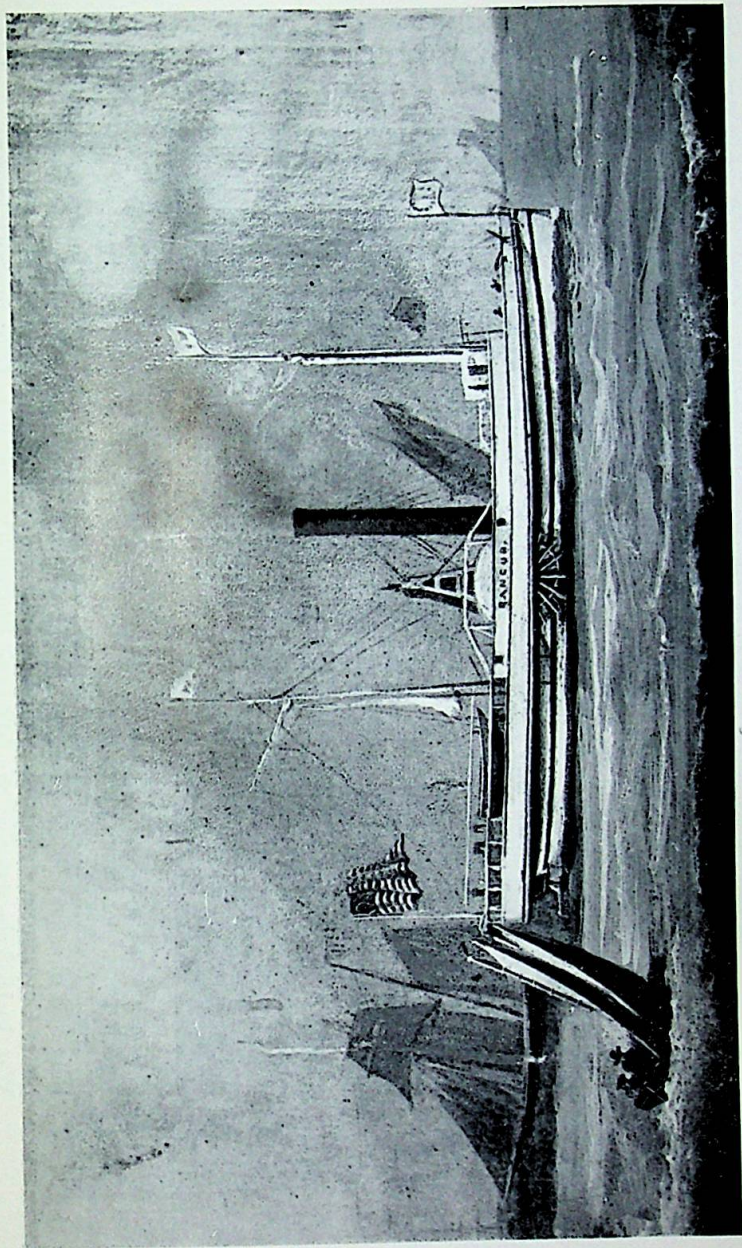
## SAILING DAYS ON THE PENOBSCOT

a vessel was looked for in the "dead air" of the extreme after portions; in a lumber coaster it was likely first to show in the bow, around and below the lumber ports. In hoisting timber, dripping wet from the river, much fresh water unavoidably found its way in and never fully drying out, the wood straightway began to suffer from the baleful effect of fresh water. In some measure offsetting this, however, skippers knew that fresh water killed barnacles, and some also flattered themselves with the idea that any boring teredos or salt water worms in the hull, found fresh water obnoxious and to be hoped, deadly. Yet it was a wise mariner who, at first opportunity, "wet down" decks with preserving salt water.

In the great days of shipbuilding, quantities of coarse salt were often used in the construction of a vessel. Salt was solidly packed in the small spaces between frames and "salt limbers" provided for its renewal at any time later, though, in some quarters, it was a question whether increased corrosion of iron used, did not offset acknowledged preservation of wood. But so generally was the value of salt realized along the coast that some thrifty owners of wharves occasionally had their surfaces well saturated with salt water pumped upon them.

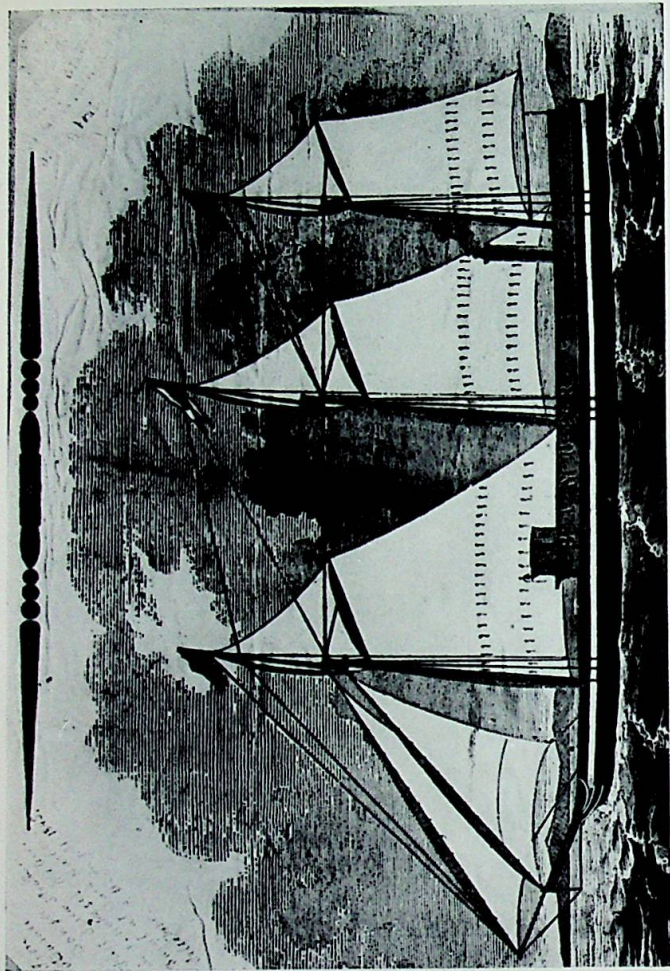
In spite of all desperate efforts to enforce port regulations, there were times when the river seemed nothing but a hopeless tangle of interlaced spars and rigging. It was a common remark that at certain points, but for the narrow strip of open water between tiers of craft lying lashed on both sides of the river, a person might walk across to Brewer entirely upon the decks of vessels.





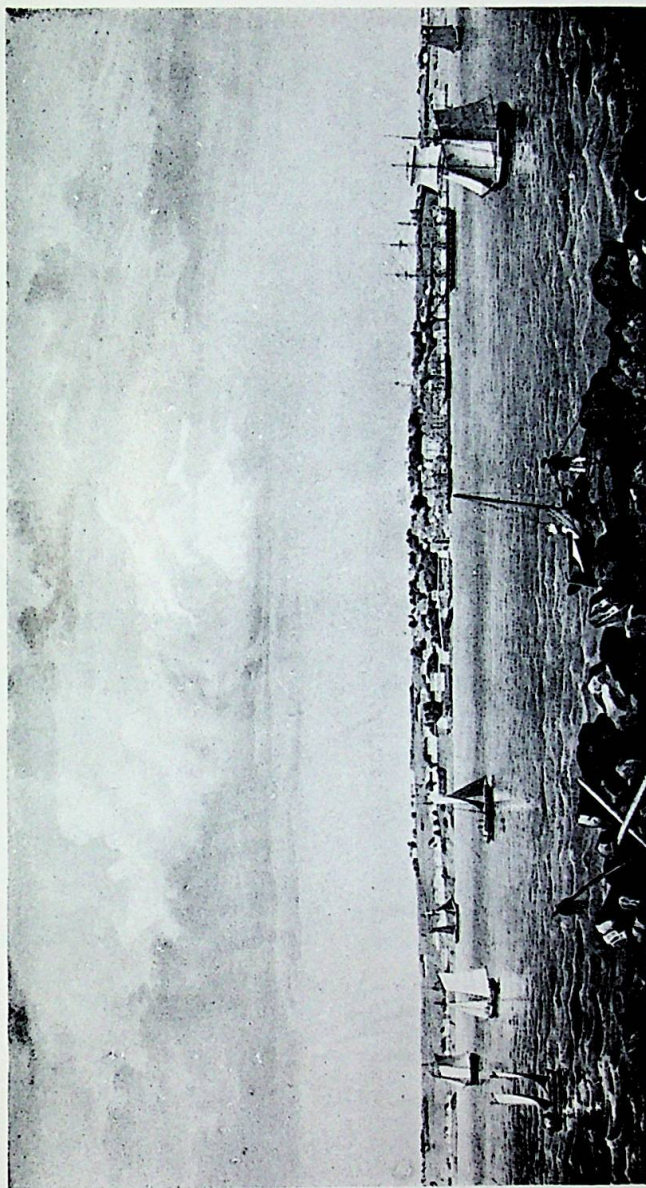
Steamship *Bangor*, 400 tons, built in New York in 1833. On the Bangor-Boston route until 1842, when she was sold to the Turkish Government and renamed *Sundowner*.





Iron steamship *Bangor*, 231 tons, built at Wilmington, Delaware, in 1844. The first seagoing propeller steamer built in the United States. On her second trip to Bangor, caught fire in the boiler room and was beached at Dark Harbor, Islesboro, August 31, 1845. Rebuilt and remained on the run until December 1, 1846, when she was sold to the United States Government, refitted as a gunboat, renamed *Scourge*, and served in the Mexican War. In 1848 she was sold to a Lafayette, Louisiana, owner and nothing further is known.





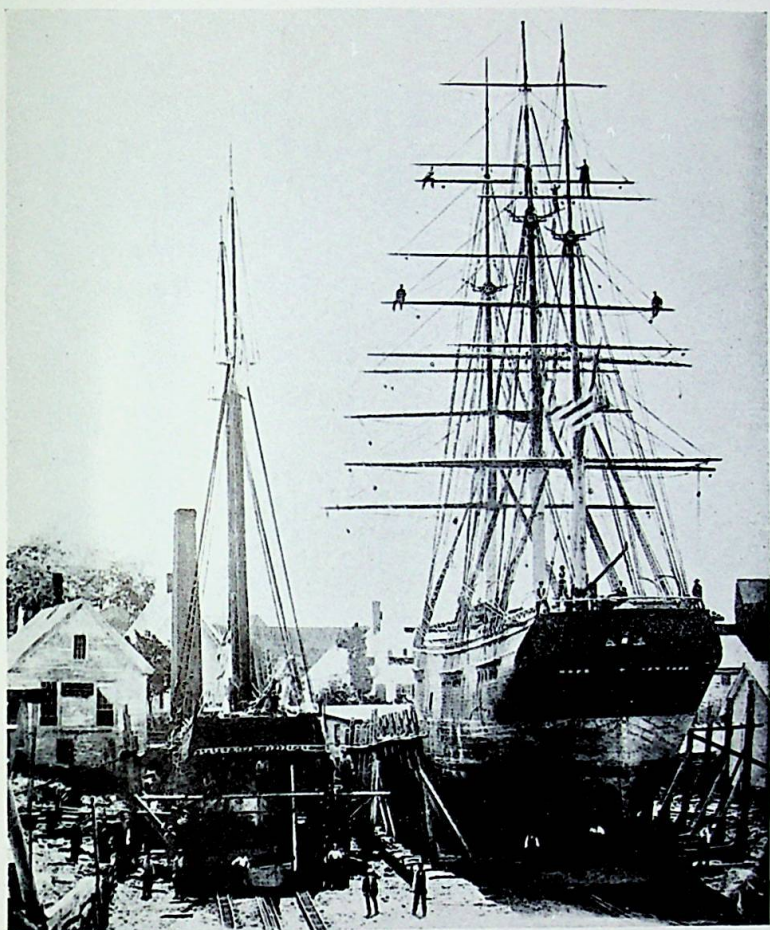
Castine, from Hospital Island, in 1855. From a lithograph by L. H. Bradford & Co., after a drawing by F. H. Lane.





Fort Knox and the Narrows, from Bucksport, in 1880.





McGilvery & Company's ship railway, Brewer, Maine, in 1870. The schooner *Alfred F. Howe* of Searsport, and the ship *Hope* of New York, built at Bucksport in 1862, hauled out for repairs.





Ship *Harriet H. McGilvery*, 1329 tons, built at Brewer in 1874.





Brig *Sarah M. Loring*, 483 tons, built at Yarmouth, Maine, in 1875.  
Shipping in the river at Bangor in 1877.





Framing in the barkentine *Thomas J. Stewart*, in the Stetson Shipyard, Brewer, in August, 1890, with ship carpenters in the foreground.



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Unusual rise and fall of tide, a more or less strong current, and often heavy wind, combined to make control of shipping most baffling in this particular port. There must always be kept open a chance for the constant moving of vessels to load at wharves, but most difficult of all operations was the forming or "making up" of long tows to go down river. Such tows often consisted of twenty or thirty loaded vessels and there is a record of thirty-six leaving at once, with thick, wooden fenders between, the vessels being lashed three abreast. How the making up of a tow was accomplished under such conditions seems now more of a miracle than ever, but by dint of long experience, the utmost skill and hard labor, under two towboats ahead and always on the ebb tide, these unwieldy tows constantly left Bangor on their slow progress toward Fort Point Cove.

The whistles of the tugs sounded frequent warning blasts, especially before turning a notoriously blind corner in the towering land at the entrance to Bucksport Narrows, topped by the granite of Fort Knox. No view of approaching navigation was to be had here, and the tide suddenly became more intense, full of gripping swirls and cross currents. Before twisting the tow around the sharp bend and again getting its serpentine length straightened out below, there always ensued a grinding, crunching and splintering of fenders, together with ominous creaking of over-strained manila, too suggestive of what might happen and, indeed, of what had happened when a vessel broke loose in the tow at this critical point.

The rule of "Might makes right" prevailed and most



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other craft accepted it by waiving all ceremonies and trying to get out of the way with all possible alacrity. Nevertheless, to captains of towboats as well as of sailing craft, the safe passage of Bucksport Narrows, on the full strength of either flood or ebb tide, was, in those days of teeming navigation, a distinct relief. On the whole, the towboat company was highly prosperous and those financially interested were considered lucky.

Not only were large boats constantly employed in towing on the river, in both directions, but they often took lumber-loaded square-riggers many miles down the Bay and left them spreading wings for a long sea voyage. Pilots, required by law, boarded these vessels near the river mouth and remained in charge until well clear of the land, and not infrequently they had thrilling experiences in getting back in their small, open sailing or rowboats.

Every year, in graceful appreciation of the liberal patronage given towboats by owners of lumber coasters in the river or near-by towns of Penobscot Bay, the towing company furnished free, a roomy excursion barge which, in tow of a tug, left Bangor early in the day with a jolly crowd of owners and captains and their families aboard. More were added at each river port and from accessible points in the upper Bay. With eatables of all kinds provided, these annual outings were eagerly anticipated and did much toward promoting the good will and neighborly feeling, especially characteristic of the lumber coasting business in those days.



## IV æ Shipbuilding on the River

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OWING to fresh water, the river at Bangor, and for miles below, was early closed by ice, which, of flinty texture, froze to great thickness. Yet winter was by no means an altogether slack season upon the Penobscot. Lumber vessels might be laid up to freeze in in the comparatively soft ice of some salt water harbor or cove on the coast, and sawmills were mostly closed, but shipbuilding continued to flourish in the winter, not only at Bangor and Brewer but in every town on the river below.\* The business gave steady employment to an army of shipwrights, shipsmiths, calkers, riggers, sail or spar makers, and also to skilled and unskilled labor of every description.

\* On May 19, 1863, there were on the stocks, 40 vessels in Washington County, 20 in Thomaston and Waldoboro, 10 or 15 on the Penobscot, 2 at Bowdoinham, one at Farmingdale, 5 ships, 4 barks, 3 brigs and 4 schooners on the Kennebunk river, 20 on the Kennebeck, several at Bath, and one ship, 2 barks and 3 brigs building at Brunswick.



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Everything pertaining to shipbuilding and complete fitting out for sea of any craft, from a small steamer or lumber coaster to the largest full-rigged ship of the day, was then to be had in the far Down East town of Bangor.

Plenty of work was to be had during the winter in lumber-cutting camps which abounded in the far northern woods, connected by stream or lake with Penobscot River. In later years, ice cutting and the filling of numerous great ice houses, at or near Bangor, also gave employment to large crews of men. With the near approach of winter and the river mightily threatening to freeze fast, loading the few remaining lumber vessels was always rushed forward with all possible speed.

Fresh water ice of enormous thickness and with edges cutting like a knife, the great rise and fall of tide, and, mostly to be feared, the almost resistless current of inevitable spring freshets, made it absolutely necessary to clear the port bare of every craft with the coming of winter.

A few unwary ones had been caught in the past and their experience in forced wintering at Bangor was a warning to be heeded at any cost. What might then occur was vividly demonstrated by the experience of the Bath schooner *Reuben Eastman*, fast nipped at the wharf by the sudden closing of the river in the fall of 1901. Cruelly maltreated by ice during the winter, the memorable freshet of 1902 nearly finished the vessel's career, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that the badly leaking craft was held at the wharf at all. Under the raging current, the ice not only broke up, but at the same time down came hundreds of rearing, plunging logs, torn loose from a vast



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"boom" up river. Portions of the high, covered bridge to Brewer were carried away by the torrent of heavy ice cakes and logs and not since the record disaster of 1846 could a worse season have been chosen for leaving a vessel in "Bangor River."

After the closing of the port of Bangor by ice, the Boston steamer came up river only as far as Winterport. When the half-salt water at that point froze over, the steamer would make her landing still further down river at Bucksport. In very severe winters even this port froze up and, in fact, so did the whole river and even the upper part of Penobscot Bay, but such occasions were rare.

On December 5, 1862, a severe cold snap closed the river without warning and twenty vessels were caught in port. Twelve were loaded with lumber and potatoes. The tug *Terror*, Captain Snow, made an effort to break a channel for them but failed. The vessels in port were the schooners *Rubicon*, *Maggie*, *Brilliant*, *Amaranth*, *Concern*, *Globe*, *Saxon*, *Columbia*, *H. K. Dunton*, *Majestic*, *Ada S. Wiswell*, *L. D. Wentworth*, *William*, *New Globe*, *Benjamin Willis*, *Star*, and *Caroline*. The ice went out the next spring, on April 19.

At both Bangor and Brewer, during the winter, long runways extending from wharves out on rising and falling ice, made constant passage between these towns more convenient than by the bridge further up. Horse trotting on the frozen river was a favorite winter sport, but, this, like ice cutting, called for endless clearing away of snow, which often fell to most discouraging depths.

A practice common in Bangor and all northern towns,



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was the annual banking up around dwellings, not only for additional warmth but to prevent the frost from striking deeply enough to heave foundations badly. For use on the better class of houses in the city, loads of evergreen boughs were brought from near-by woods and carefully spread. Around others and especially in the outlying towns, sawdust, earth, ashes or hay were used as banking, and were held in place by boards. A thing significant of the up-heaving frost to be expected in Bangor, was the custom of providing wooden front or back steps, screwed to the house by heavy hinges which allowed them to rise and fall without damage. Granite steps or walls, and sidewalks of concrete, too often showed the havoc wrought by the frost; and snow, too, was another matter to be taken into account. Before daylight on the morning after a great snowfall, snow ploughs began the job of making sidewalks and streets passable, and men soon appeared, armed with ladders, coils of rope, long-handled, wooden snow rakes and other gear designed for removing snow and ice from roofs or eaves before the heat of well-warmed houses caused bad leaks to develop. All these precautions against cold, frost and snow are still common in the city.

As freezing-up time drew nigh there arose annually the great question of what was best to do with the lumber fleet. Unless compelled by circumstances, leaving craft in upper "Bangor River" was not advisable, and hundreds of suitable places on salt water must be found. At best, any vessel hauled up in complete disuse would "go back," even more than when in commission, for it was then that



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rain and melting snow most continuously got in the deleterious work of fresh water upon decks and topsides.

Clearly demonstrating the marked difference between salt and fresh water, in their effect upon vessels, the sample case of one veteran lumber coaster, the *Elizabeth*, may be cited. This schooner, when over sixty years of age, had been rebuilt three times in deck and topsides; yet, to the day of her condemnation and final abandonment, she retained the original timber of bottom and sides close to the waterline.

Numbers of the larger vessels engaging in the lumber trade, while ice permitted, went upon offshore voyages during winter, and others found something to do in less severe climates further south. Still others, fewer in number, with skippers and crews having no other permanent homes than afforded by generally small and old vessels, kept up the worse than dog's life of winter lumber carrying on the ice-cold and often storm-lashed waters of the New England coast.

Taking on board a cargo of lumber at one of the many small ports on the Maine coast not so early closed by ice as fresh-water Bangor, skippers of these vessels would hope to kill much of the winter through extremely long trips, notably lengthened by prolonged stays at anchor in secure harbors. Always waiting for fine weather and a favorable slant of wind, but always prepared to dodge for shelter into the nearest harbor or "hole in the beach," these craft made short and cautious runs from one good haven to another. In the most protected parts of secure harbors,



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though sometimes in much trouble from ice and threatened with dragging of anchors in furious northeast storms, they often remained at anchor for weeks at a time, the men subsisting upon tea, saleratus biscuit, dry fish and potatoes, with a treat of clams from near-by flats, when possible.

Though living expenses were thereby reduced to a minimum, cash often ran low, and many kindhearted ship-store keepers, with little hope of ever being repaid, would refit skipper and men who came in to huddle over a hot stove after beating heavy snow from inadequate clothing, and with benumbed fingers pulling long icicles from beards.

Some idea of the length to which these few, winter-coasting trips were protracted may be had from the record breaking one of a small schooner, the *L. D. Remick*. Late in the fall she sailed with lumber furnished by a sawmill at a coast town not far from the mouth of the Penobscot, and one hundred and one days later arrived at her port of destination on the northern shore of Massachusetts. What arrangements were made with consignees, insurance companies and the like, were matters best known to those interested.

The vessels left port in the fall with more or less cordwood aboard for use in the cabin stove, but this fuel becoming exhausted, bucksaws were unhesitatingly brought into play upon the deck load, portions of which, it would be claimed, had been lost overboard and the loss then broadly ascribed to the "dangers of the sea." In reality, however, it went for warmth and the half-baking of sodden, yellow saleratus biscuit.



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The vast majority of lumber-loading vessels on the Penobscot, were hauled up in the winter season. Many of the last to sail, hurriedly loaded and getting away from Bangor before the freezing up of the river, were late in discharging cargo at Boston or other ports "to the west'ard." Then hearing for a fact, or fearing that their usual hauling-up places in Maine were closed by ice, or thinking that a long and stormy trip back might prevent them from reaching home in time for Christmas, they would unbend sails and leave their vessels where they were.

Every winter dozens of such craft were to be seen stripped and made fast in out-of-the-way docks where they grounded at each tide, and where, in spite of any supervision which might be engaged, ice generally did more or less damage before spring. They were by no means ideal spots for wintering, though much preferable to certain other places in which lumber vessels sometimes found themselves caught.

As an extreme example of what might happen to a coaster left, per force, to winter under most undesirable conditions, the case of the Bangor schooner *Cicero* was not soon forgotten by those in the lumber trade. Late in the season this vessel, deep-loaded with lumber, towed a half dozen miles up the Mystic River from Boston to a wharf at Medford. Cold and stormy weather had already set in and although all possible haste was made in discharging cargo, the river, here largely composed of fresh water, suddenly froze over too solidly for egress. There was nothing to be done but to take extraordinary precau-



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tions for leaving the vessel to winter as best she might. Unfortunately, the sails had been lowered when wet and had frozen into solid masses of ice and snow and could not be unbent, but many extra heavy fenders were strung between vessel and wharf, and instead of lines, one of the chain cables was used in securing her fore and aft. A man was found who agreed to look after the vessel and the captain and crew packed their belongings in canvas bags and took train for home.

The winter proved to be the most severe for years. Balls of ice, as large as a hogshead and of flinty hardness, formed between vessel and wharf with rise and fall of tide, crowding her off so that the chain cable tore the windlass from her, ripped up decks forward, while aft, a length of the same chain, from wharf to quarter-bitts, broke them short off in the deck and cut down the vessel's rail.

She was an old craft and thick ice, dropping with ebb tide from the sides, sucked oakum from the seams, butts and wood ends of the planking, until from leaking and continued freezing, the hold was half full. No pumping could be done, for the seaman's old simile of "frozen solid as a pump-bolt," was most practically exemplified. As spring approached and ice began backing up, lines, run by the man left in charge, alone prevented the vessel from working broad-off into the narrow river.

Absolutely perfect spots for wintering vessels were none too frequent even upon a coast like that of Maine, abounding in harbors, inlets and coves. The ideal location should be land-locked and therefore free from tidal currents. It should be deep enough for any sized vessel to lie afloat at



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all times and so avoid the dangers common to any craft, but especially felt by old vessels, of ice breaking from the sides of grounding craft. Even though it has the briniest of salt water on the coast of Maine, all coves, wherever situated, were expected to freeze up, and sometimes did so to the thickness of two feet or more; but so long as the lay of the land prevented ice from moving out in a body and taking with it all wintering vessels, thickness did not matter.

There was another thing to be thought of. Many other-wise suitable places had openings directly toward the sea, which were narrow enough to prevent ice from passing out in a mass, but which admitted enough of the ocean's long, ground swell to crack up the ice field at times, so that the first strong, off-shore wind was likely to move it and make no end of trouble if vessels were there. Such places must be ruled out for the purpose, but enough others, good or indifferent, were filled with lumber coasters, out of a job, until spring. Plenty of capable help on shore looked after their welfare, for this was an age of shipping in which both sexes were familiar with vessels and their needs. In those days, on or near the coast, almost every lusty boy looked forward to some sort of sea life as a matter of course, while going lumber coasting was the first and most common of occupations. A boy no sooner learned to tell time than he began to familiarize himself with "boxing the compass."

Old sea terms were not only well understood in all homes on shore, but in most families were used as everyday household words. Even a minister, in his two-hour sermon just



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after Christmas, solemnly assured his flock that he had lately been most grievously "taken aback" by detecting three little children using their sleds on the Sabbath afternoon. He warned his hearers that all such children were "carrying sail" on "a course shaped straight for hell."

Every nook and corner on the shores of harbors, inlets and creeks, had small craft blocked up or hauled out and it was a common season for repairs by owners of craft, small and large, either frozen in solid, out in the ice, or on shore. At scores of suitable spots, vessels were to be seen on the stocks, one craft no sooner overboard, at the first chance in the spring, than the keel for another was stretched and the frame set up. In all quarters, dismantled hulks attested the need of new vessels.

At every river port, and scattered here and there on the river shores, was the familiar, though gruesome sight, of condemned hulks, hauled up and left to "die." In striking contrast with the new timber of vessels always building upon stocks close by, these pitiful relics of the old lumber fleet, often had weather-worn carving, still dimly glinting with patches of gold leaf. Boldly carved letters on quarterboards still spelled the names, *Gamecock*, *Mentora*, *Centurion*, *Rising Sun*, and those of other well-known, old coasters, by the score.

In one place, alone, seven of these abandoned hulks lay nestled side by side on shore, the tide flowing and ebbing in their dark, musty holds, and rank weeds growing in the seams of their rotting decks. Some still sat, bolt upright; others leaned heavily against a neighbor, as if for support; some still held up spars, but in other cases masts had fallen



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and in a tangle of hemp shrouds, gray from weather, but stiff with the tar of many years, lay across the broken-down bulwarks of other craft.

Many of these abandoned vessels had been completely "run out," through years of service, but not a few of them were victims of disaster, in one form or another, upon the crowded river. Of the hulks lying scattered along the shores, several had been so seriously damaged in the vicinity as to have been beached at the nearest point and then considered not worth repairing. Here they lay, sharply keeled in at high-water mark, their blackened masts often intermingled with the spruces and white birch trees thickly growing to the water's edge.

Those interested had removed anchors, chains, sails and all serviceable gear, but, in those days, use of the hull and spars for firewood seemed the last thing thought of and they stayed for years, undisturbed except by huge ice cakes, heaped high above them by the gales and tides of winter. Masts might fall and remain as they fell. More old hulks might appear, but not until a comparatively recent date did the growing price of wood induce people to pick away on them until only unburnable floor timbers were left. Then spring freshets and ice gradually carried away the rest.

Today, scarcely a trace of the old lumber fleet is to be found, and these few poor remains are always in some secluded nook, free from rushing ice and tide. In the mouth of a small stream entering the Penobscot at Hampden, low tide bares the flattened bottoms of the lumber schooner *Olive Branch*, and the brig *Harry Smith*, said to



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be the last of that rig built and owned upon "Bangor River." Close to the shore, a short distance below this point, and at low tide easily to be seen in less turbid water than that of the Penobscot, lies the hulk of the United States ship *Adams*. This fine vessel was undergoing slight repairs at Hampden, when she was blown up and sunk to prevent capture by the British in their land raid upon Bangor during the War of 1812. For decades the hull was accessible at half tide, and many pieces of copper sheathing were stripped from the bottom. Though only the slightest vestiges remain of the many wharves and warehouses formerly at Hampden, the home of the Kenduskeag Canoe Club still stands, high upon the wooded bank, a relic of the days when Bangor citizens sought recreation upon the river. Further upstream, but within the limits of Hampden, was the Bangor Yacht Club, once flourishing, with hundreds of enthusiastic members, but for years gone, with house, pier and small craft.

Breaking up of the ice in the spring, for many years the event of the season at Bangor, was looked forward to with decidedly mixed feelings. Universal joy at the prospect that the Port of Bangor would soon again really exist, and be open to the all-important export of lumber, was always tempered by anxiety as to how the ice would behave when leaving.

In the old days of intense navigation, the departure of the ice meant far more than can be realized now, since the very life of the town, to a great extent, depended upon a clear river. The exact date on which the ice would "go out" was always the subject of innumerable bets and



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prophecies and its appearance from day to day, or later, from hour to hour, was closely watched and reported. Sometimes the ice gave up its long winter grip with fairly good grace and quiet; at other times, rage and determination to do all the damage possible marked its forced abdication. It pulled away from the shores all objects not firmly secured, and with much noise of grinding, crunching and with air-rending squeals, it heaped high against and over wharves, driving back the crowds gathered to witness the final scene.

The extent of the damage was chiefly dependent upon how much dreaded "anchor ice" had formed in the river during the winter, and here it may be said that this ice, of evil repute, was that enormously thick ice that had frozen or become anchored to the river bottom. Five miles below the town was the first of several narrow places in the stream where there were abrupt, rocky banks that caused serious trouble in the spring. The ice generally broke up with the down rushing current of a freshet, and on reaching the first of these narrows, became wedged between the steep banks and formed a jam. Commonly this cleared itself after a day or so, but great masses of anchor ice were only too likely to render the jam a nearly water-tight dam, extending from bank to bank and reaching to the river bed.

Efforts were often made to start the jam before it might reach the proportions of a dam and expert river-drivers from upstream, lithe, active men accustomed to singling out and destroying the "key-logs" of log jams, would try their hands on this ice barrier with varying success. If not



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by some means broken, the ice often quickly piled high between the wall-like banks and the water steadily backed up until the wharves and lower streets of Bangor became flooded.

During the last backing-up on record, piles of lumber containing millions of feet, were set adrift, business streets were deep in water, and untold damage was done. No wonder then, as the river showed signs of breaking up and the existence of anchor ice was feared, that tons of goods in stores were moved to upper stories, or that there was a universal feeling of relief when the last ice passed out.

As to the mystery of what caused the formation of anchor ice in some seasons, and not at all in others, great difference of opinion existed. It was agreed, however, that ice of this nature did not depend upon an unusual severity of the winter. Much snow in the water, at the time of the first freezing, was generally supposed to be a bad omen, yet this often occurred without serious stoppage of the river by the common spring ice jam at the Narrows. Whatever the cause of anchor ice, it was and is a bugaboo of early spring and well known to be chiefly responsible for the backing up of water with consequent damage.

Within the past few years, the government has sent up river, early in the spring, a steamer with a specially designed ice-breaking bow and a propeller secured from danger of contact with ice cakes. Instead of attempting to part the ice and push it aside, this craft runs herself out on the ice at each charge and the vessel's weight breaks down and passes under her the thick ice which had baffled a much larger revenue cutter with a bow of ordinary shape.



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Beginning at a point down stream where the ice is comparatively soft and thin, owing to a strong mixture of salt water, good progress is made until tough, fresh water ice, a foot in thickness, is met and makes slow work in opening the narrow channel. This ice breaker removes the annual threat of a jam at the Narrows, and causes an early opening of the port, though, unhappily in these days, no great fleet of coasters is awaiting the once joyous event.

In Bangor, the advent of spring was always strongly emphasized by the arrival of hordes of newly paid off lumberjacks. These men, of various nationalities, warmly clad in every variety of fantastic garb, after a long sojourn at camps in distant woods, were generally wildly eager to spend money on more or less hilarious "times" in town. Aided by a plentiful supply of poor liquor, easily to be had in the supposedly parched State of Maine, this annual influx of idle, pleasure-hunting woodsmen with money burning holes in their pockets, for a brief time, gave rise to frequent drunken orgies and quarrels. Until the troublesome swarm had squandered its money and scattered again (no one knew where or cared about the order of their scattering so long as they went), it was significant that policemen, especially chosen for known prowess in rough-and-tumble affairs with sailors, river-drivers and others, always patrolled the lower streets of the town, *in pairs*.

First to appear up river was generally the Boston steamer, gayly strung with flags from stem to stern, the deep tone of her whistle welcome music to the cheering crowds assembled on the wharves. Lumber coasters by the score, meanwhile, had gathered at anchor in Fort Point



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Cove, waiting for the drift ice to pass out, or for the strong spring current of fresh water to subside. At this time of year it was ebb tide nearly all day, and as fresh water did not readily mix with salt, its wide, brown current, with well-defined edges, could be traced for miles down the Bay.

An impatient and venturesome skipper once deciding that all the ice had gone out, managed to sail against the still strong current, from Fort Point Cove up to within a few miles of Bangor. Here encountering fresh fields of dangerous ice coming down, he dodged under the half shelter of a slight bend, let go both anchors, and expecting at any moment to be cut through or swept adrift, hung on for the better part of a week before an early tugboat came to his rescue and brought the vessel in triumph to first choice of loading berths at Bangor.

All this great business of lumber cutting, sawing and carrying on the Penobscot River, is now entirely a thing of the past, with material, mills and vessels existing only in the memory of old-timers. Owing to complete exhaustion of forests accessible to the river, of the hundred mills once running, not one log-sawing mill remains; and recently a cargo of spruce, for building purposes, arrived in a British schooner from Nova Scotia.

Small schooners of the breed formerly known as "Bay-coasters," though nowadays always fitted with noisy auxiliary motors, bring pulpwood to a paper-making plant below the town. So, too, does an occasional foreign steamer from the Provinces; and coal comes to Bangor in grimy barges, with immense cargoes, towed up river.



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In fact, so strikingly free of all navigation is the river now, at times, that recently the trip from Bangor to Castine, six miles down the Bay from Fort Point Cove, was made in a small sloop without meeting or even seeing so much as a rowboat in motion.

The once familiar sign, "Sail-loft," is still to be traced high on the sides of certain old buildings near the river, and is almost the only indication left that Bangor ever had the least connection with sailing vessels. A few grizzled ex-sailmakers, in snigger quarters below, continue to make awnings, tents, auto truck covers and even shirts, but certainly have no use for the great loft overhead. Unpainted woodwork, brown with age, and deeply hollowed treads of the stairways leading up, eloquently tell the tale of an old and once flourishing business.

Near the center of the loft hangs the usual, large, cylindrical stove, suspended by rods a foot above the smoothly worn floor, to allow the spreading of canvas. Fully as useless today, too, are the low, time-darkened sailmakers' benches with their array of queer-looking tools, now stacked together, thick with dust. A small room, partitioned off from the loft and capable of being heated with a stove, shows where the sailmakers could limber up a bit on the frequent below-zero days when the loft stove might as well have been hung out of doors.

Until quite recently an oar-making establishment, just across the river, in Brewer, continued to operate, and for many years Brewer-made oars were held in high reputation in all northern ports.

One industry, strongly reminiscent of shipbuilding days,



## SAILING DAYS ON THE PENOBSCOT

is at least alive, on the Brewer side, even if working on a comparatively small scale. Short, longitudinal roots of the larch, with a section of the trunk itself, forming the famous "hackmatack knee," are brought by rail from Canada, and in a small mill are sawed into various sizes and angles. The wood is not only of great durability, but has the valuable quality of holding fast to a singular degree and has long been held to be of great value in shipbuilding. The knees were largely depended upon for stiffening deck beams and firmly tying the vessel together. In the finest and highest rated clipper ships built in Boston, top timbers of Maine hackmatack often took the place of the purest white oak, on account of greater lightness.

While there is now no local demand for the product of the small mill in Brewer, knees are shipped by rail to large cities to the south, and used in building lighters, wharves and so forth, and not a few find their way abroad. Years ago, however, Maine was far from calling on Canada for supplying hackmatack. It was a very plentiful growth in certain localities, but was attacked by a worm that rendered it worthless for building purposes and in time practically annihilated the species in the state. Within a dozen years the tree has sprung up again profusely, and though not yet generally large enough to furnish knees of requisite size, neatly stacked piles, carefully kept apart, or "stuck" for seasoning, are occasionally to be seen by roadsides near the coast.

Unless again destroyed by some pestiferous enemy, this most valuable variety of fir, distinguished by its deciduous, scraggly looking foliage, bids fair to become plentiful once



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more. Devastating paper mills, preferring spruce to all woods, have already stripped coast and islands of the tree, wherever attainable, and are securing vast tracts in the far interior. It is only too likely that the new growth of hackmatack will, in time, contribute to the enormous mounds of material at various paper mills and this valuable wood be ruthlessly ground into pulp.

During the first World War a spasmodic and generally abortive attempt was made on "Bangor River," as elsewhere in the country, to revive the old art of wooden shipbuilding. American shipping had already gone, or was far on its way, to the dogs, but most alluring tales were rife concerning the fabulous returns made by patching up and sending overseas certain old sailing vessels. Some hulls were known to have been for years in unseaworthy condition, while others had actually been stripped and hauled up as practically worthless. The government at that time was sending out frantic appeals for more and more ships as essential for winning the war. The need for steamers especially was emphasized, and a standard design was offered together with help in building hundreds of these wooden craft.

From Bangor to Fort Point the fever spread. Old shipyards long unused, with blacksmith shops, molding lofts and various sheds either in most dilapidated condition or fallen outright, with weeds and grass plentifully springing up among large areas of weather-beaten chips, suddenly became alive with men eager to put them once more into shape. Rusty tools and implements of the ship carpenter's trade, adzes, broadaxes, augers, jacks and clamps, were



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brought to light and their particular use often explained by the few men still familiar with them.

Wagon loads of unseasoned timber, sometimes including a variety of wood rarely if ever before put into a vessel's frame, arrived daily in quantity, while laborers capable enough of doing the rough work required in rebuilding launchways carried away by ice or far gone in decay, were procured. Then loomed up the first of the only partially appreciated handicaps incidental to the sudden starting up of a former great but then almost forgotten industry on the Penobscot. It had not been fully realized that nearly all of the old-time shipwrights and others, skilled in the art, had removed, become too old for active work, or passed away.

As the first step toward "setting up" any new vessel, a half model of the hull must be made, and a skilled designer was found only after much search and delay. Plenty of old models were to be had in the vicinity, but those of vessels large enough for present requirements, were generally of very deep square-riggers, weatherly as sea-going craft, but needing more or less ballast when without cargo, or "light." What was needed was a wide, flat-floored vessel of enormous carrying capacity, and since no return cargo from overseas was to be expected, the vessel must be of a build able to make the homeward bound trip when "stark-light." A satisfactory model at length having been secured, more serious difficulties arose. The half model, it may now be best to explain, was made in carefully scaled strips called lifts, held together by wooden keys and easily taken apart for exact measurements.



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Men competent to "take off" from the model a pattern or mold for the vessel's frame and, often in an improvised molding loft, to "lay down" these molds in exact size and shape, were at that time exceedingly difficult to find. With other skilled mechanics necessary in shipbuilding, they belonged to a past generation, and the few left were eagerly sought for at many points on river and coast where the building of a large vessel was once more to be undertaken. The plain truth of the matter was that in 1917 there were not nearly enough of such men left to go around. At best, those raked and scraped up could serve only as a partial leaven upon the others. Carpenters, however expert in building a house, were generally all adrift when it came to wielding an adze efficiently. In planking up the vessel they knew little about "taking a spiling" for each plank, of making a correctly beveled "calking seam," and still less about the really fine art of "lining up" a vessel. Even in the palmiest days of shipbuilding, an expert "liner-up" was often regarded as a very rare man, and his particular services were in constant demand at different yards.

It is not in the least surprising then that in the dearth of all skilled labor in shipbuilding prevailing on the Penobscot in 1917, that poor "lining-up," "hollow seams," and uneven calking, were among the defects characterizing this afterclap of vessel building. A few old men, slow in movement, but veteran shipwrights, did their best to be in two places at once and direct the work of green squads, not always with entire success.

The first vessel built was a comparatively small four-



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masted schooner and she was floated without serious mishap. A second very much larger craft, in fact, said to be the largest ever built on upper "Bangor River," was at once set up and profiting by experience from the first one, quickly grew ready for launching.

The time was fixed for eleven o'clock on a certain day, thus definitely showing that one ancient rule of launching had not been overlooked. High water at that hour, or, as they were known—"eleven-o'clock tides"—gave the greatest rise and was always chosen for a launch.

There was a cold drenching rain on this day and a stormy wind blew directly up river, but hordes of men, women and children, most of whom had never seen a launch, assembled in the old shipyard and under umbrellas and tightly drawn coats waited for the rare sight.

Even under most favorable conditions the launch of a vessel, and especially a large one, was an anxious occasion. Many men had been killed or badly injured at launchings and many vessels irreparably strained and damaged. When, therefore, the report spread quickly that only one man was capable of taking full charge and directing the movements of workmen, wholly inexperienced in the launch of so large a craft, the tension already existing in the minds of many, became general. A few old men in the vicinity knew more or less about the always hazardous launching of vessels, and might at least have assisted in superintending, but maybe the bad weather kept them under cover, or possibly they chose not to be mixed up with a delicate operation in which it was freely predicted all kinds of mishaps were likely to occur. At this critical



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stage, the slightest wrong or premature move might easily undo all that had been accomplished in building a large vessel under difficulties heretofore unknown on the Penobscot River. Not a man dared strike a blow except under the direct orders from the rain-soaked, panting old man, who dozens of times hurried around in all quarters, till his voice, weak and hoarse from shouting, could scarcely be heard above the din of mauls now falling thick and fast upon hundreds of wedges.

At last, the vessel's keel having been raised from its blocking and her whole weight resting on the greased ways, she slowly started and with fast increasing speed slid down the smoking ways without mishap of any kind. In great billows she rolled aside the brown river water amid such cheers and exulting cries as never celebrated such an occasion in the old days when launchings were common affairs.

Entirely owing to the knowledge and untiring vigilance of one man, the launch was successful, but no sooner had the great craft left the ways than woeful lack of experience made trouble in plenty. Anchors hung at the catheads in readiness to let go almost at the moment the vessel's bow dropped from the ways, but the raw, excited men on board so fumbled the matter of paying out sufficient chain cable to give the anchor any holding power, that the ship was more than in midstream before she was even partially "snubbed up." Seeing what was too likely to happen, in a panic the second anchor was dropped, but there was then no room for scope and the craft, still under considerable sternway, cut a dozen feet into a wharf on the opposite



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shore, tore out the roof and side of an old warehouse, and seriously damaged her own stern.

To sum up: no batch of men direct from the potato fields of Aroostook could have been less efficient.

A large vessel was built at East Hampden and still another at South Orrington. At the launch of the latter, a brass band had been engaged and a great crowd assembled in cars, wagons and on foot. As the vessel started to move, amid a din of cheers from the spectators, the band burst into a triumphal march, which, however, ignominiously stopped, as owing to a spreading of the ways the vessel stopped short and was not moved again for a fortnight.

At a shipyard near the mouth of the river, here over a mile in width, and abandoned long before the last vessel had been built in Bangor, the government's offer of aid was accepted and the yard was hurriedly put into some sort of condition. Plenty of the best obtainable hard pine timber was brought from the South, at governmental expense, and piled ready for use. From both sides of the river and from generally unprofitable rocky farms, miles distant, there flocked men of all ages and conditions, anxious to become shipwrights, or any necessary variety of skilled mechanic, over night; and while helping "to win the war," by toiling for Uncle Sam at most remunerative wages, also to lay by a dollar in cold cash. Some found lodgment in scattered houses on shore, some came and returned daily in boats, and a few lived on board craft anchored or moored close by. The place was a true type of "one-sided harbor" and especially in winter, men at all



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dependent upon wind and weather, for access to work, often had what was termed a "dirty time."

The three unrigged craft built here were simply a disgrace to the country. One was a steamer, after a so-called standard design supplied by the government and from which hundreds of these vessels were built. The vaunted standard design was suddenly discovered to be all wrong, in every respect. Enormous crews were necessary, the machinery was so cumbersome, and the available cargo space so small that the vessels could barely pay running expenses. Some few were afterward worked off on Scandinavian nations, at a tithe of their first cost, but the great majority eventually lay tied up in fleets, at various ports of the country, waiting, and some still wait, disposal at any price.

As for the work done at this particular time and place, it was enough to make departed shipwrights turn in their graves. Raw oakum showed in seams not even payed. Long, bunchy spaces in planked seams, from which calking protruded in ridges, were followed by stretches of "hollow-seams," with calking driven out of sight, and which the most expert calker could never have made permanently tight. No wonder that many wooden craft built under government "inspection," leaked so badly that soon after launching it was necessary to dock them.

With few exceptions, privately built sailing craft got into the game not only too late for profit, but never even paid back more than a fraction of their cost. Some were lost, some auctioned off, but more joined the fleets of large schooners lashed together at heads and points and laid up



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in different harbors. There was no overseas business for them and the coasting trade had gone almost entirely to the owners of towed barges, huge steel steamers, and railroads. All in all, the attempt to resuscitate the defunct art of wooden shipbuilding on the Penobscot was a disastrous failure as it was elsewhere in the country.

At the time of the clipper ships, American shipbuilders brought this noble class of sailing vessels to such perfection that even the English, hostile as they were to American shipping, were forced to acknowledge our superiority, by ordering clipper ships to be built on this side of the Atlantic. When we consider the great number of ill-designed and wretchedly built craft set afloat in our waters during the war, it is far from consoling to reflect upon the enormous changes that have taken place in a comparatively few years.

Bangor now has a larger population than ever before but its glory as a port, and especially as a lumber port of unparalleled renown, has long since departed. Maine, though stripped of her stately pines, is still known, sometimes ironically, as "The Pine Tree State." She still flourishes, even if largely by extending the glad hand of welcome to summer visitors. Nevertheless, let anyone familiar with the river and waterfront of Bangor as they once were, now look upon the empty river, silently flowing toward the sea between many grass-grown, abandoned wharves, in all stages of decay, and he may the more take home the words of the poet, who sorrowfully wrote:

"I feel like one who treads alone  
Some banquet hall deserted."



## V æ Isle au Haut Fishermen

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**I**SLE AU HAUT, though out of the Penobscot River itself, forms the eastern entrance to the Bay, and men piloting lumber-loaded foreign ships from the river mouth to the sea were generally supposed to leave the vessel somewhere off this island. From here captains might make sail and work to open sea, clear of a few still further outlying naked rocks, without minute local knowledge. But any account of summer or winter doings in the Penobscot region should deal with the lonely isle, until late years known as "Isle o' Holt."

Mount Desert, the Camden hills, and Isle au Haut, all within sight of each other, are the three highest points on the Atlantic coast of this country. Owing to its extremely isolated position, Isle au Haut, containing a good-sized and generally safe harbor, was one of the very last places on the Maine coast to change from a typical old-time fishing port to a modern summer resort and most exclusive at that. Summer people were "rusticators" who knew no difference



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between "hand-lining" fish over the high rail of a sharp-stemmed pinky schooner with a pea-pod stowed on deck, and capturing immense "fares" of fish in a modern auxiliary schooner carrying on deck a nest of dories, each stenciled with the name of the firm manufacturing them by the thousand in some steam-powered factory.

Summer visitors at first were not always held in high favor. An old resident of a fishing town not far from Isle au Haut, once being asked whether any summer people had yet appeared, replied in evident disgust, "God, no! We've steered clear of the tribe so fur, clip and clean." When these folk spoke of red or black buoys as "tide-sticks," and called tillers "handles," it did seem more than human nature could stand.

On the north side of Isle au Haut, well named "High Island," by Champlain, in an early voyage along the coast, between it and a long densely wooded island, was the only harbor of consequence. It was known as "the Thoroughfare," though a muscle bar at the upper end prevented actual passage through, except at the top of high water. That it was at one time of consequence is well attested by many mounds of large seaweed covered stones which once held down wharves built of tree trunks, laid and bolted together in rough cob-work.

On these rude wharves or on land close at hand stood warehouses and other buildings, for in brigs and topsail schooners was carried on a flourishing West India trade. Vessels took out cargoes of dry fish and brought back rum and hogshheads of molasses, with which to make more rum, since good old rum was, on land and sea, an all important



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commodity, in almost universal use. Leather-bound ledgers kept in stores bearing the familiar legend "W. I. Goods and Groceries," often showed how well-to-do deacon and poor fisherman alike relied upon frequent daily "nippers" and "tots" for necessary balm and sustenance.

Fishing schooners, not only at Isle au Haut, but in many other coast towns, in early days, were divided into classes known as "Baymen," "Labradormen," and "Bankers." The first made trips to the Bay of Chaleur, the second to the desolate fog and ice-beset coast of Labrador, while others fished mostly on the Grand Banks, salting their fares on the spot and remaining until the supply of salt was exhausted.

So common and cheap was rum at that time that some fishing craft were reported to keep a keg of rum lashed on deck aft and, attached to it by a spun-yarn lanyard, was a small tin dipper from which all hands might quench thirst as occasion demanded. Probably such vessels had no difficulty in picking a choice crew each spring.

Still another use for rum on fishing vessels must be noted. "Bankers" and "Labradormen" had to start with great quantities of salt in their holds. The trip would last until all the salt had been used upon the fish caught and this might be a matter of months. Of course, in the spring fitting-out, a reasonable supply of rum would be included, but an extra long trip was likely to reduce the amount to a point causing much anxiety if not actual loss of sleep. Red rum could readily be had by landing at any Nova Scotia port, but this would entail delay, perhaps much augmented by the "time" sure to be indulged in by the



## SAILING DAYS ON THE PENOBSCOT

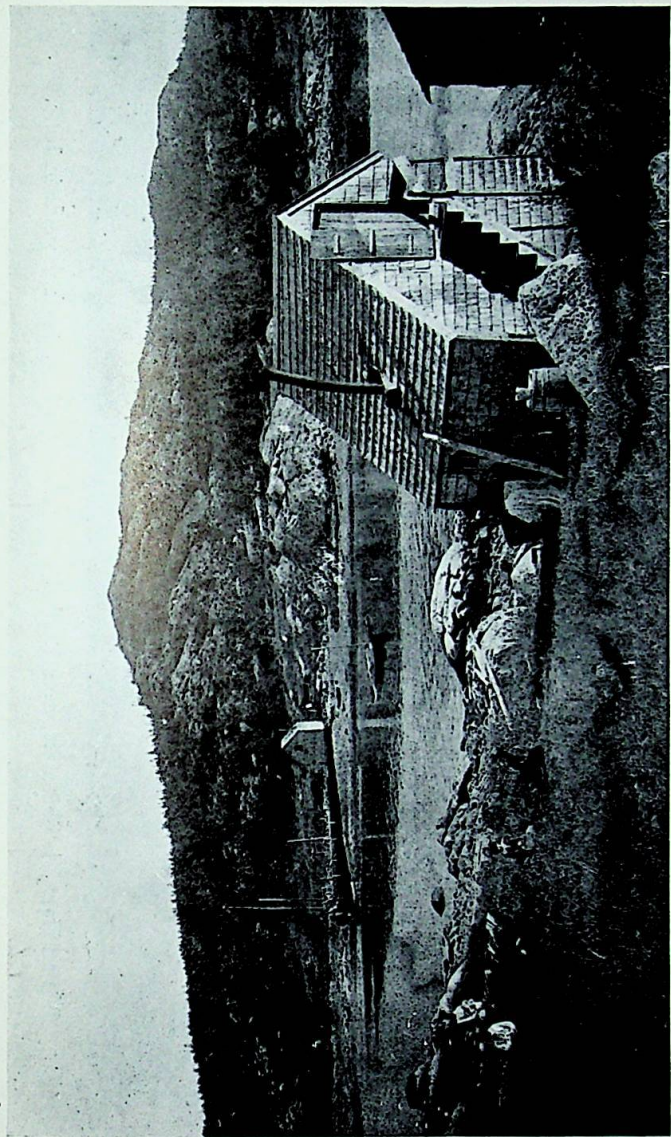
crew, once on shore. The wise and prudent fishing skipper knew a trick tending greatly to prevent trouble. By stowing a keg or two of rum in the hold underneath the salt, inducement for hard fishing, consuming salt, and so getting at the rum sooner was offered the crew, generally with gratifying results.

On all the six-mile length of Isle au Haut there was only a short space of what, by any stretch of imagination, could be called a road, and this extended along the row of scattered houses, called "the Thoroughfare." Up to the middle eighties, signs of wheel ruts were lacking, not only because its shelving ledges showed no imprint, but for the very good reason that outside of a creaking hayrick, with wooden axles, there was not a wheel on the island.

A girl fourteen years of age had never seen a horse, though well able to guide a yoke of oxen slowly hauling a drag, loaded with bags of grain and provisions, from a small packet schooner at the wharf. So-called cart paths, never seeing a cart, but wide enough for oxen and a drag, led from "the Thoroughfare" around the east side of the island to its precipitous southern end at Head Harbor. There was a small settlement of boat fishermen and lobster catchers who braved the known dangers of this exposed harbor for the sake of the excellent fishing to be had on near-by grounds in the broad Atlantic.

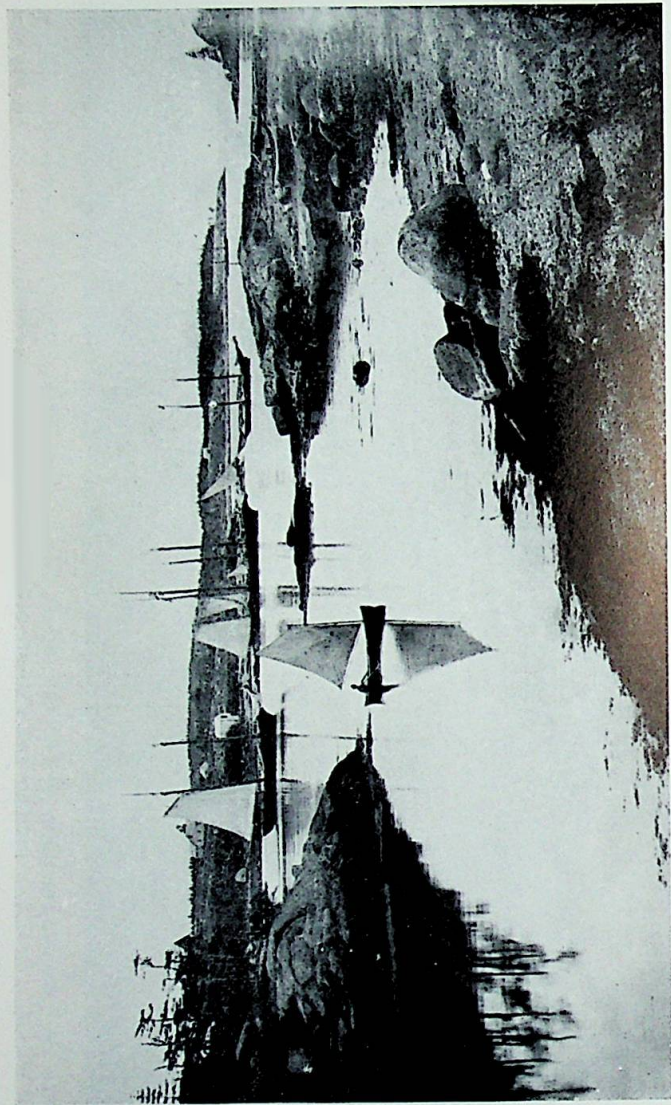
Cart paths also led up the spruce- and fir-grown sides of the mountain which gave the island its name, and there was also a narrow path, making a short cut to Head Harbor, over a part of the mountain and through boulder-strewn woods. On all paths, of whatever nature, were to





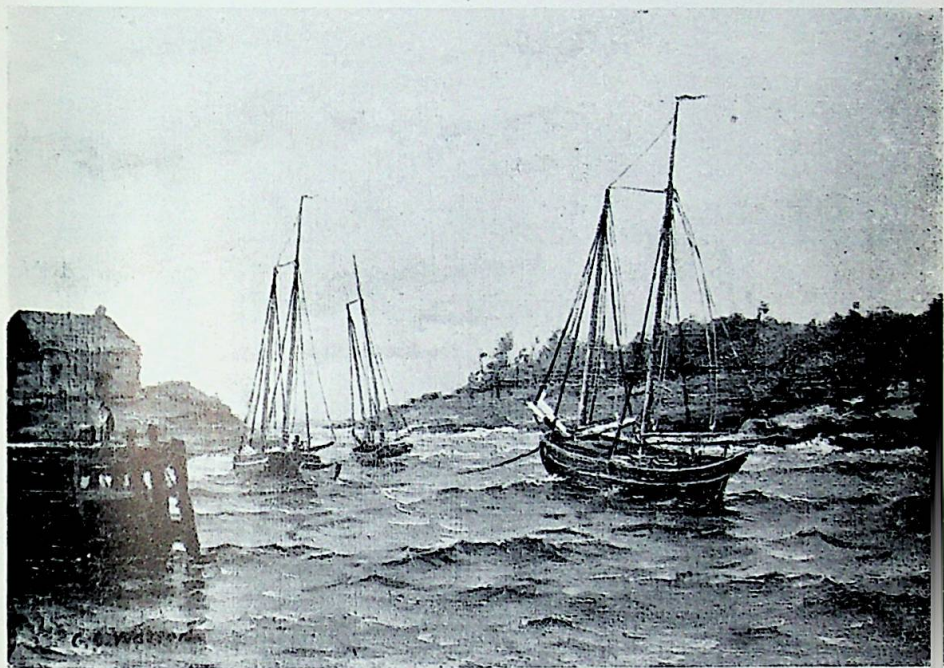
House of Solomon Hamilton, Jr., Duck Harbor, Isle au Haut, Maine. The family consisted of father, mother, and sixteen children. Photographed in 1896.





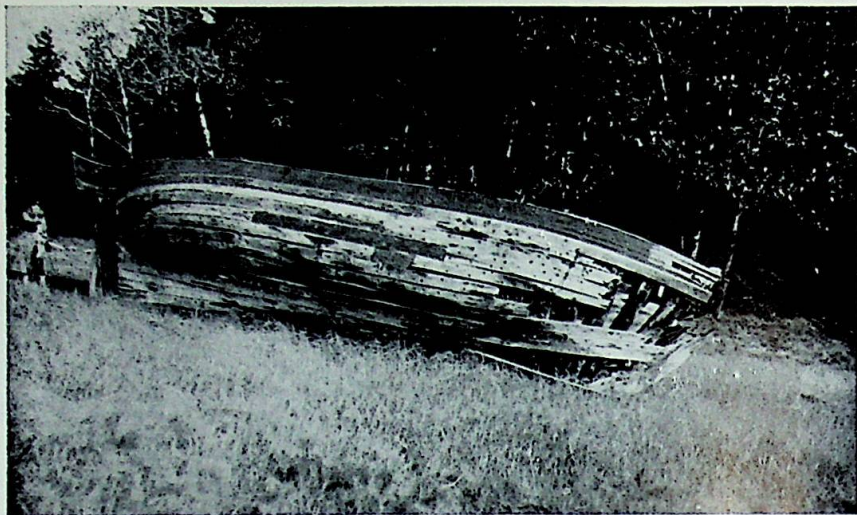
Isle au Haut Thoroughfare, from Kimball's Island. From a photograph made in 1896.



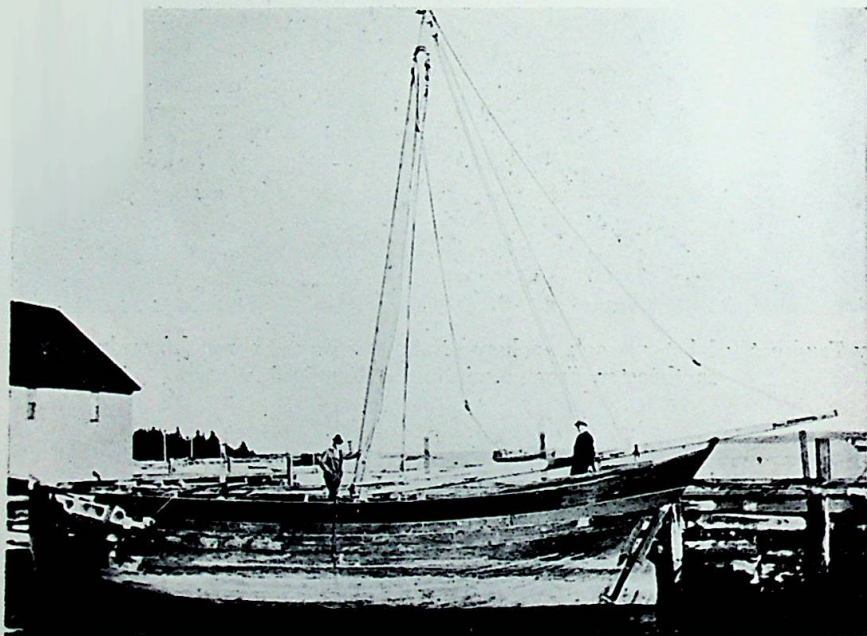


*Pinky Trumpet*, a lobster smack, anchored in Isle au Haut Thoroughfare during a fresh southeaster. From a painting by George S. Wasson.



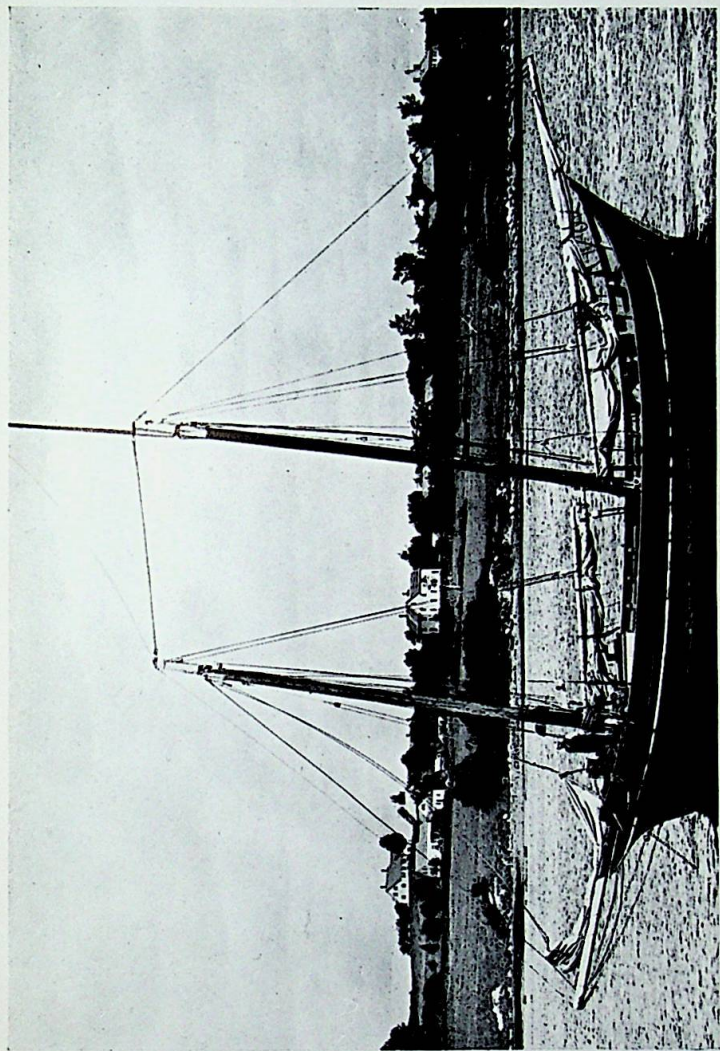


The last days of the pinky *Mary*. Courtesy, Alfred Elden.



Breaking up the last pinky. The *Maine*, built at Essex, in 1845, being dismantled at Jonesport, Maine, in October, 1924.





*Pinky Maine*, 24 tons, built at Essex, Mass., in 1845. A perfect example of the pinkie type. From a photograph by J. B. Belfast Harbor.



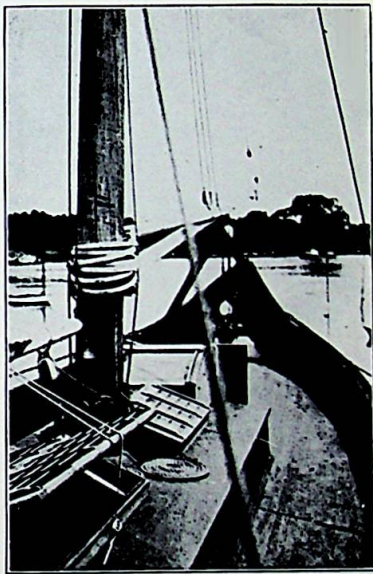
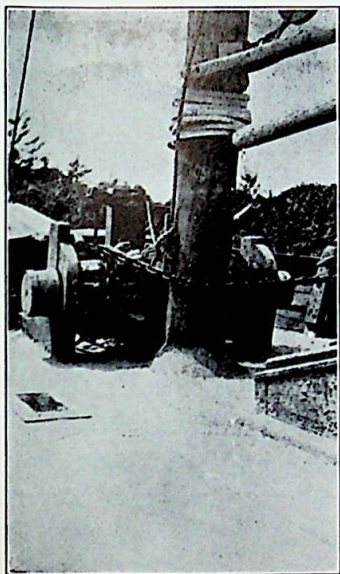
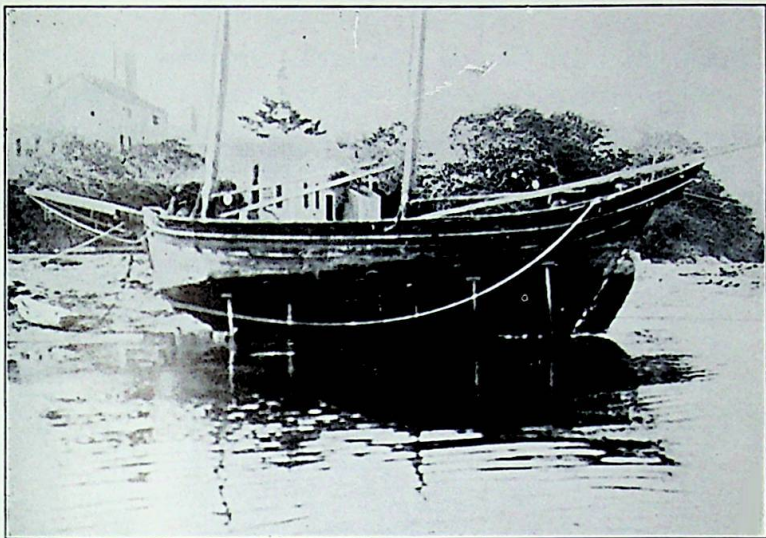


Pinky in Eggmoggin Reach, off Deer Is'le, Maine.



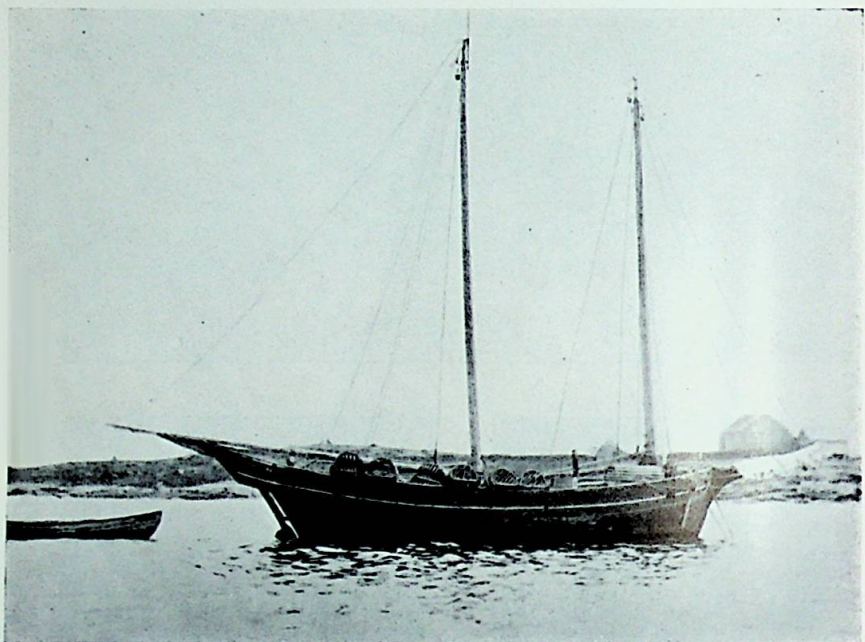
Pinky *Metamora* of Bristol, Maine. Lost at New Harbor, Maine, in 1912.





*Pinky Eagle*, of Castine, 20 tons, built at Duxbury, Massachusetts, in 1854.





Pinky *Mary* of Friendship, Maine, built in 1811. Bought by Admiral Peary to be kept as a relic. From a photograph made in 1905, near Port Clyde.



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be found dwellings, often small beyond belief and most primitive in all respects, but containing families astonishingly large in number, all of whom, except the youngest and oldest, made nothing of walking to and from "the Thoroughfare" in fog, rain, or snow, at any hour of day or night.

Owing to the isolation of life on the island, there was a pathetic desire for the least entertainment. Regularly, on the Fourth of July, a procession of "horribles," including men, women and children, paraded the waterfront, and was greeted with a deafening salute, fired by the blacksmith, from an old anvil placed in front of his shop.

Somewhere about 1870 a Boston concern repaired an old wharf at "the Thoroughfare" and erected a large building, resting partly on the wharf and partly on shore. In it the business of canning lobsters was started, but after a few years of activity the project was given up. A former deep-sea captain established a store in part of the ground floor, over the door of which he placed the usual sign "W. I. Goods and Groceries." Overhead, the great, entirely unfinished packing room, mostly cleared of workbenches, though never furnished with regular seats, became the "town-hall," and with the exception of the tiny, seldom-opened meetinghouse, it was the only adequate place of public gathering.

Each summer frequent "spells" of weather and long-drawn "fog mulls" drove into the harbor mackerel schooners galore, and among them was sure to be some fiddler of coast renown, whose services were at once engaged for a dance at the factory. The news would spread like wild-



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fire to the remotest spots of "Isle o' Holt" that perhaps on the very next night a "time" was to be held at "the Thoroughfare." Just how word reached practically every inhabitant, at such short notice, was a matter of comment even among those most directly interested, but no telephone message could have been more effective. Regardless of weather conditions there would appear from distant Head Harbor, from Rich's Cove; and straggling homes on the entire east side, across half a mile of water; from York Island Harbor, along narrow, rocky and often steep wood paths; from little settlements of fishermen at Duck and Moore's Harbor, on the west side; excited men, women and children, pathetically eager for what amusement was promised. In addition, numbers of roughly clad men, wearing well-greased "kag boots" of natural-colored leather, came ashore from seiners anchored in the harbor and made fast their yellow dories at the factory wharf.

In the hall, seating accommodations were afforded by a couple of the remaining workbenches, augmented by boards stretched between boxes, kegs and inverted buckets placed around the wall. All available space was early occupied by men and women eating peanuts or dates, and by children, their cheeks bulging with great rock-like parti-colored candy balls fished from the usual glass jar in the store below.

Naturally the whole place reeked. The room was blue with smoke from the rare treat of cigars. On a box near the center stood the fiddler in his woolen shirt sleeves, shoulders freed of the knit galluses, which now dangled



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from his waist, in complete readiness for the night's strenuous work.

Contra dances, always called country dances, the Virginia Reel, Lady of the Lake, Portland Fancy, the Lancers, and many others were called off in stentorian voice by the fiddler, down whose red face perspiration coursed. Blue painted wooden pails of lemonade from the store were emptied by constant scooping of thick yellow mugs in eager hands. Cigars gave place to corncob pipes and in spite of open windows, smoke and heat increased until clothing hung from each of the many nails driven in the rough studding of the walls.

Especially during intermissions the number of men noticeably decreased, and the half-smothered tones of voices came from below. However much copious draughts of lemonade might tend to assuage thirst, a "time" at "the Thoroughfare" called for something far more appropriate to the occasion, and as night wore on a genteel sufficiency of cheering beverage was forthcoming. Those seeking or bringing up refreshments from below kept up a continuous loud thumping on the resonant stairs. Soon there appeared round pilot biscuit, slabs of cheese, pickles, tamarinds, and more dates from the matting-covered bales just behind the counter.

The fiddler ceased from his exertions to partake liberally and some good singer from the fleet of mackerel seiners, being warmed up to the requisite mood, might render several of the most heart-breaking, ever popular "Come-alleyes."



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At length when the time arrived for leaving, a few generally had more or less hazy ideas as to the exact location of home, while to others any home at all was a matter of the utmost indifference, but in some cases with good-natured assistance the place was cleared. A "time," however, meant good trade for the storekeeper. Many took home with them large bundles of provisions and the grizzled old seaman found it well worth while not to "douse the glim" and turn off the kerosene lamps of the store till the last one had departed.

Small boat building flourished to an astonishing extent on the shores and among the islands of Penobscot Bay. Generations of seafaring, shipbuilding men produced a breed which took to the building of boats as ducks take to water. Practically everybody had a boat under construction. Other occupations might often intervene, and boat work be very intermittent, even protracted, on the same craft, for months or even years, but eventually a boat would be dragged from barn, shed, or one-time henhouse or even hoisted up through the bulkhead of a cellar.

Roomy, bluff-bowed, strongly built yawl boats for lumber schooners were always in demand; but peculiar to the lower Penobscot region were double-ended, lap-streaked boats universally known as "pea-pods" and famed for being especially able in rough water.

Few families were too poor to own a woodlot, but, if without one, they cut cedars for planking with little secrecy or dug out crooked juniper roots for boat frames in any rocky woodlot where they might be found. Wordy disputes



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over boundaries often led to quarrels in which men "took holt" of each other in earnest.

Some one of the many sawmills located wherever stream or brook furnished power, stripped cedar trunks into "live-sawed" plank, with bark left on either edge, and hackmatack roots, known as juniper, were shaped at home into most durable frames of "natural crook" for "pea-pods." Thus in those days people living on the main obtained material for building these boats at the small price of sawing plank and buying boat nails and paint. But the many then living upon the lonely islands of Penobscot Bay were not so well situated for small boat building, though these boats were essential to them both in summer and winter.

On Isle au Haut, at one time, eight hundred people made a living from fishing and small farming, though later lobster catching became the chief occupation, and "pea-pods" were more of a necessity than ever. Tending outside "gangs" of lobster pots was mostly done in small sloops, but each sloop working in the wholly exposed waters of the Bay required a "pea-pod" tender. These doughty little craft were often used alone for tending lobster pots set nearer shore. Isle au Haut and the "pea-pod" seemed inseparable.

The mail carrier on the six-mile route between this island and the next island in steam communication with the mainland, generally made his trips alone in a sloop, but of course towing a "pea-pod." In severe winter weather, when passage was likely to be much blocked by tide and wind-driven fields of ice, he took with him extra help,



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and putting a stout sledge athwartships of the "pea-pod" began rowing her on his hazardous route. If completely headed off by ice, the "pea-pod" was dragged out, put crosswise on the sledge, and pulled to the next space of fairly open water when the process was reversed. Sometimes attempts to make the trip failed altogether and Isle au Haut had to go without any news whatever from the main for two weeks at a time. In payment for his services this particular mail carrier received, as his share, the sum of all postage on matter carried, yet his modest home at Isle au Haut bore no outward mark of affluence and the weather-worn gate hung askew by only one rusty hinge.

Parts of Isle au Haut were densely wooded with spruce and fir and, like other islands in Penobscot Bay, had little material fit for boat building. In the fall the islanders laid in a stock of suitable wood from the main and, being by nature endowed with a knowledge of the work, built "pea-pods" during the stormy days of winter. The few not having "pea-pod," skiff, or gunning boat under way, when ice or weather prevented pulling of pots, spent much time in making new pots, repairing old ones, or skilfully knitting twine-heads for new and old.

Evenings always found the store crowded with loafers of all ages, who smoked and chewed while talking local gossip, boat building, lobstering and fishing, well into the night. On almost every habitable island of the Bay went on apace the winter building of boats. The keeper of a lonely lighthouse was especially noted for the excellence of the boats he and his father before him built, and for the matchless quality of dry fish, cured or "made" by him.



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Both fish and boats found ready market, and fame of the latter was widespread.

Most of the earlier "pea-pods" were lapstreak or "clinker-built," with rather clumsy looking frames of "natural-crook" hackmatack carefully notched to fit each lapped plank, but those built later had frames of oak, steamed and bent to the required shape. The planking, too, became of "set work" or square-seam variety, smooth on both sides and depending upon calking for tightness. In lapstreak boats each plank or streak was beveled to lap one upon another and then closely fastened between each frame. The swelling of the wood and paint gave what further tightness of laps might be needed. The only calking necessary was at the wood-ends of each plank where they joined stern or stem-piece and on the lower edge of the garboard streak, where it fitted the wide and thick bottom board of hard wood, taking the place of a regular keel.

It may be mentioned that in this whole locality the term "hard wood," then, as now, broadly included native wood such as yellow birch, maple, beech and red oak, with now and then a scanty sprinkling of highly prized white oak, though the climate was too severe for this most valuable species to grow in any quantity.

A wide and heavy bottom board, tapering at each end, made landing or hauling up on rough shores comparatively easy and also was well adapted for receiving the center-board found in many large "pea-pods" whose owners, at times, appreciated a homemade spritsail.

In early days rowing was invariably done cross-handed, that is, the long, heavy oars were more evenly balanced



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by being drawn inboard between wooden tholepins, till the right oar was grasped by the left hand and vice versa. Oars were more or less rough, homemade implements of spruce and constant use, with none too smooth tholepins, wore badly upon both oars and pins. Any old resident of the coast can easily understand the force of the ancient simile, "suffering like a blamed tholepin," though few knew at the time that the obsolete Anglo-Saxon word "thole" meant to endure, and hence, for centuries, had been most applicable to the hardwood pegs, roughly fashioned with hatchet and knife.

Later, when lobster catching became the chief occupation in Penobscot Bay and vicinity, factory-made ash oars and iron rowlocks gradually worked into common use, and cross-handed rowing with tholepins was laughed at as reminiscent of old "pod-augur" days. One peculiarity of lobstering, in all ages, remained unchanged. Standing in a "pea-pod," facing forward and pushing on the oars, gave a much better chance for locating the white buoys attached to a gang of lobster pots resting ballasted on bottom. So far as is known this seemingly back-breaking style of rowing was never adopted elsewhere.

Lobster smacks were especially welcome at "the Thoroughfare," the smaller harbors of Isle au Haut, and other islands of the Bay, or, in fact, wherever the smallest cluster of houses existed. They bought lobsters dropped fresh from the pots into nearly submerged cars where they were kept alive for shipment. The term "smack" alone distinguished smaller schooners containing wells filled with salt water through holes bored in the vessel's bottom. Any



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craft not equipped with a well was no "smack," though in modern times landsmen wrongly apply the term "fishing smack" to all vessels engaged in fishing of any sort. True smacks were often sharp-sterned craft called pinkys, with rail rising aft to a high peak, ending in a crotch for holding the main boom when sail was lowered. Pinkys, often known as "pinks," were noted for their seagoing qualities and were, above all others, of purely New England origin. The last of the type, at the age of seventy-nine, was broken up in 1924. They are now as obsolete as the dodo and many other types of our mercantile craft are fast becoming so.

It was not solely on account of a desire to receive cash for their accumulated catch that lobstermen anxiously watched for the arrival of the smacks. Apples did not flourish in the salty air of the island and cider was a rarity. Copious draughts of the barber's own peculiar make of spruce beer, together with insufficient imbibing of dandelion wine in teacups, occasionally produced by women folks, were all very well in their way, but naturally men following the arduous business of lobstering could not be expected to live by such drinks alone. Smacks not only brought accumulated lobsters and were mediums of news from towns and cities on the main, but except just previous to election time, they also enjoyed special facilities for bringing out stone jugs with contents of far more cheering nature, to patrons ordering such in advance. Skippers of certain smacks, balking at this important part of the business, were generally brought to terms by the significant words "No rum brought, no lobsters sold." Thus the con-



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tents of numerous cars were fairly well distributed among visiting smacks.

The always hoped-for but most uncertain arrival of mackerel upon the coast, in enormous schools, was sure to bring into "the Thoroughfare" swarms of craft, large and small. The larger schooners that followed mackerel up the Atlantic coast and fished entirely with seines were always known as "seiners." After detecting a school of fish, by its peculiar ruffling of the surface, their plan was to surround it by a seine, and at one haul often secure vast quantities. With long, especially designed seine boats to carry the carefully rolled seines and numerous crews, these vessels had every appliance for doing business on a great scale.

Few elderly residents on the northern coast will fail to remember Captain Sol Jacobs, "king of mackerel catchers," whose wonderful skill in setting seines often resulted in "trips of fish" that filled the deck of his schooner, knee-deep, from rail to rail. Smaller schooners, many of them of the picturesque pinky build, sometimes used seines, but with the sloops and double-ended "carryway" boats, once so numerous as "porgy catchers," they generally drew single fish over the side upon lead-weighted hooks, called "jigs," and so were known, the coast over, as "jiggers."

A third class of still smaller craft, attracted by the great lure of mackerel and using jigs alone, were somewhat contemptuously alluded to as mere "smoke-bo'ts." Word that mackerel, and perhaps fat mackerel at that, had struck upon the coast, at once brought "jiggers" and "smoke-bo'ts"



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from all the towns on "Bangor River," from every port in Penobscot Bay, and from coves and inlets in all directions, with men, and often women, anxious to share in a fascinating sport while, at the same time, making a dollar.

No devotees of rod and reel on inland fresh waters ever showed more zest than did these folk of varied shore occupations, when pursuing what was well known to be an elusive luxury. Like the "heathen Chinees" of Bret Harte's familiar poem, the ways of mackerel were dark and peculiar. One season they might be so plentiful as to glut the market and the next, not even a small tinker, or still smaller "spike," would show itself. They might bite so voraciously that only the quickness of catchers limited the number of fish pulled up and slatted over both sides, yet at any moment all biting might stop and no "heaving of porgy-chum," or other tempting bait, would bring back the least indication of fish in the locality.

For some unknown reason every mackerel suddenly left, generally to appear again in vast numbers at some point often miles distant, there to be chased up by the motley fleet. On such occasions, at night or with shutting in of thick fog, any harbor or cove of Isle au Haut was likely to swarm with small craft. Even Head Harbor, in spite of its drawbacks, was sometimes packed by scores of "jiggers."

Visitations of the mackerel fleet to "the Thoroughfare," were not, however, altogether unmixed blessings. In long stays caused by fog mulls or rainy days, constituting "spells of weather," or entire lack of wind, most "jiggers," in one way or another, left cash upon the island. Some were



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shrewdly suspected of pulling lobster pots outside and appropriating contents, while the movements of "smoke-bo'ts" were especially to be watched. These boats, the smallest and generally most poorly fitted of all jiggers, though including craft of all kinds and conditions, were often old yawl boats given up by schooners, but sometimes raised forward enough to form a "cud," with stove of some sort and narrow bunk, where, with careful stowage, two men might turn in. Often in a leaky, homemade skiff, men from "smoke-bo'ts" came ashore to wander about and stretch their legs. Yet, beyond buying a few plugs of black tobacco, they generally gave the old storekeeper scant reason to soften the gruff tones of his voice, long accustomed to bellowing orders from the quarter-deck of his wall-sided molasses brig.

One other equally important object of shore visits, made by occupants of these boats, was never overlooked. Carrying stoneware demijohns and battered tin milk cans, men followed the well-trodden, spongy path leading to a never-failing spring near-by and there secured a supply of cold, fresh water.

When herring were abundant, Isle au Haut Thoroughfare, from its outside and more easily reached location, was much resorted to by shore fishermen in search of bait for their trawls. "Torching" herring by night was a common way of taking the little fish and afforded a unique scene especially attractive to summer visitors. In the outfit of a shore fisherman was included a flaming kerosene torch, which, when projected on a short pole at the bow of a dory rowed to and fro, drew masses of herring to the



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surface just beneath its glare. A man standing in the boat's bow, armed with a long-handled dip-net, then constantly scooped fish inboard, and especially on a dark night, with herring plentiful and readily "rising to the torch," the necessary amount of bait would soon be gathered in.

Besides fishermen, with now and then a coaster running into "the Thoroughfare" for shelter, schooners, known as "traders," called at least once during the summer and helped, in later years, break monotonous life at the lonely island. The prime requisite for a "trader" was a wide, stiff vessel, not easily careened by wind. She must also be of shoal draft in order to lie at the smallest wharf in out-of-the-way "gunk-holes" where the best trade was to be found. On deck, between the masts, was built a diminutive but real house, clapboarded and shingled, with doors in after end and windows upon one side. A sign prominently announced "Five and Ten Cent Counter." The foresail was cut high in order to swing over the house on deck. Shelves occupied every inch of space upon the walls of the interior, and on the windowless side stood a counter boasting scales and a tiny glass showcase, crammed with the usual fancy articles, highly colored and scented cakes of soap, gilt-banded moustache cups and all the necessities for shaving, cards of lace, jewelry, jackknives and knick-knacks of every description. Shelves were literally packed with boots and shoes, dry goods, and everything to be found in a general store, including, of course, a safe nook for the two glass jars, one containing candy balls and the other twisted sticks of most attractively colored candy. Space was also found for the usual case of matted dates.



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A trap in the floor led, by a stepladder, to the hold where lanterns, swinging from deck beams, disclosed stacks of blue-painted wash tubs, crockery and rough earthenware, barrels of kerosene, a hogshhead of molasses, and many other bulky articles.

A typical trader would haul into the head of the former lobster-factory wharf, and make fast for a week's stay, or much longer if trade warranted. It was well understood that everything on board was to be had either for cash or in exchange for pelts of various animals, dry fish, potted mackerel, old sails or rope, and in short, for junk of every nature. Business came not only from "the Thoroughfare" but from all parts of the island. Often the skipper's wife attended to work in the cabin, aft, and fully as sharp as he in driving a trade, seemed, even more than he, to realize the value of small talk with male and especially female customers. News and any kind of "gossip-talk" from neighboring islands or small settlements on the main was eagerly received and proved most conducive to lively business and a more protracted stay.

As may be imagined, the local storekeeper was by no means enthusiastic over the visits of "traders," and viewed them in much the same spirit often shown in later days towards department and chain stores. "Traders" had their own peculiar troubles. These vessels were always well along in years and sometimes they were badly strained through long lying aground at wharves only suitable for smaller craft. Sometimes they were unable to leave from being "tide-nipped" until the next high run might float them. Very cautious not to be out in stormy weather,



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wind, or rough sea, at times they were caught and with disastrous results.

The skipper of a "trader" once admitted that though in general his stock never "fetched away," on his first trip that season a vicious flaw from the high land of Mount Desert Island, laid him out so effectively that not only everything fetched away in a mass, but much damage from breakage ensued. Only carrying away of the jib allowed the craft to regain her legs.

On many parts of Isle au Haut, blueberries flourished in great quantities and, commonly known as "plums," were gathered and used in the homes of the islanders. Their fame spreading, large parties of blueberry-picking men, women and children came from towns far up bay and river, in schooners or smaller craft, and living on board in "the Thoroughfare," they daily picked on shore until receptacles were full, when the craft then speedily filled away for the main.

Beyond getting a little milk at convenient houses, "plumming" parties were of little benefit, and generally were regarded with slight favor. Hence it is significant that the earliest of summer visitors to the island were often spoken of as mere "plummers," though, later, under the "rusticators" or "boarders," were in much better repute.

"How many rusticator folks you got up to your place this season, Cap'n?" asked one native of another. "Wal, we've got half a dozen, all told, jest now. I kind of hate to have them kind 'round under foot, summertimes, but we make out to git a dollar out of 'em some ways or another."



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Another regular visitor in the harbor was a cobbler, who, in a peculiar craft of his own construction, came under sail from somewhere up the Bay and at once hauled in at the wharf. This flat-bottomed scow, for she was nothing else, only appeared when a fair wind, dead astern, blew the absurd rig down the Bay, and the wonder was how, under any weather conditions, the owner ventured upon the open trip. This craft also had a high house of matched boards with windows on each side, though the top was flat and covered with canvas. It was painted light blue and in yellow letters on the forward end appeared the words, "W. Cottle. Boots and Shoes Repaired on the Rolling Deep." A high piece of rusty stovepipe rose from the roof. Grounded on the beach close to the head of the wharf, for a fortnight or so, W. Cottle lived entirely upon his boat and never lacking company, literally pegged away at his trade. Numbers of residents combined cobbling with other occupations, but though no deep ever rolled at the head of the wharf, and the Cottle plant lay high and dry, most of the time, daily, still the attraction of a professional, together with a tinge of romance attaching to one so visibly claiming to cobble on the "rolling deep," brought many patrons, especially of the gentler sex.

On this remote and sparsely settled island, the jack-of-all-trades existed as a necessity, though it by no means followed that he was always good at none. The blacksmith not only shod oxen but was an adept at all kinds of iron work and much aided by a cant dog, also "hauled teeth" with known facility and thoroughness. As successfully doctoring-up people suffering from various ailments, he



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had high repute. His duties as trial justice, and as the deacon, and having the key of the church, occupied less of his time.

The postmaster at "the Thoroughfare" was the man combining the most occupations of any. He built excellent boats of all sizes, retopped chimneys everywhere on the island and later erected spacious cottages for early summer visitors, doing all the mason work himself. He cut and furnished ice for all cottagers and was the first to bring a horse to the island. In his shop went on constant building or repairing of boats, though sometimes, in emergencies, suspended for the hasty construction of a pine coffin, lined with cotton sheeting from the store. The post office had long been located in an unfinished ell of his house and family life was often interrupted by callers wishing to post or obtain mail. Being a man of progressive ideas he thought to do away with part of this by cutting a slot in the clapboards of the ell, through which mail might be posted without coming inside. Over this he painted "Letter-Box" and also a hand pointing directly into the slot.

Soon after, while the family were eating dinner at the usual hour of eleven, a disturbance was heard outside and on going to the back door, the postmaster found in front of the new letter box, a woman who had tramped six miles from Head Harbor to do a few "errands" at the store, and also to post the card still held in her hand. Flustered with anger she cried indignantly, "I can't make out to shove my hand chock down into that hole of your'n if I should die for it." In vain he tried to sooth her, explaining that it



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was not necessary to put her hand into the slot, but she held up an abraded wrist, exclaiming, "Didn't you go to work and paint a hand pointing straight down into that hole?" and darkly hinting that the new contraption might induce her to have the law on him, she handed him the card and stamped away, violently slamming the gate behind her.

The meetinghouse, a tiny white building with belfry and steeple in regulation New England style, was many years ago built on abruptly rising ground several hundred feet behind and above the houses stretched along "the Thoroughfare." From certain points seaward, the little white church, backed and strongly emphasized by the dark, wooded slopes of the mountain, could be seen long before any signs of the settlement were visible. In the belfry hung a small bell saved from the English bark *Sunnyside*, that had been totally wrecked on the frowning rocks near Eastern Ear, when the nineteenth century was young. A half-obliterated path leading from "the Thoroughfare" up to the church was one of the many signs showing the lessening of population on the island, a diminution unequaled upon the northern coast. Portions of the once much traveled path were gullied and washed by rain. Grass nearly closed it at other points and weeds grew close up to the sagging steps of the building.

No pastor was attached and except on rare occasions the house was closed for ten months in the year, but in midsummer, divinity students from the Bangor Theological Seminary were sometimes sent to practice their vocation. Elementary practice, too, it proved to be and although



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these efforts in the pulpit were doubtless of some value to the students, the few men who were coaxed by their wives to attend, regarded them as a mild joke upon themselves. Divinity students appeared very like other young summer visitors. They went fishing, climbed the mountain, poked over huge Indian clamshell heaps, became fairly competent "plummers," and by no means ignored the charms of island girls. On the whole, they were good mixers and in direct contrast to the dour-visaged elder who, once a year, held forth in the little church.

Late on a foggy afternoon in September, when most visitors had left, this man, alone in his small sloop, came slowly into the harbor and anchored. The boat and the black-coated figure were instantly recognized from shore and with notable lack of enthusiasm, word was passed around that old Elder So-and-So was going to preach on the next day. Sure enough, he embarked at once in his "pea-pod," and knowing who had the "say" as well as the key of the church, rowed straight ashore to the blacksmith's shop. Arrangements for opening her up on the morrow having been made, the blacksmith felt bound to invite the visitor to have supper and spend the night with him at his house close by. But the elder positively declined, and saying that when on the boat he "felt alone with his God," off he went.

Of course the only inference to be drawn was that even a short stay on the island might have contaminating effect on so holy a man as himself, but the smith, as well as others, again questioned whether his preaching did enough good to warrant the "soft snap" made possible by parties then



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unknown. The opinion was that it did not. All, however, agreed that as a skilled boatman and pilot, the Elder was an expert.

Years prior to this, emigration from the island had begun, leaving deserted homes and small farms in all parts of "Isle o' Holt." Many moved to fishing towns on the main and some continued far west. During the gold fever of 1849 a number of families united in building a small bark at "the Thoroughfare," and in her, men, women and children made the long, stormy passage around Cape Horn to San Francisco. Other wholesale forsaking of the island followed for years until the population became reduced to a very few hundred. Poor schooling, lack of competent doctors or surgeons, and general isolation, especially felt in winter, finally "got" much more than half of the people and they took the first chance of leaving.

Although comparatively little snow and ice long withstood the salty air, there were times when, in spite of ocean swell and a touch of undertow heaving in, even "the Thoroughfare" closed up. It was upon such an occasion that a man, while gunning, blew off his left arm above the elbow. The mail carrier's six-mile route northward, to a doctor at Deer Isle, was blocked by thick drift ice, grinding in the swell between several intervening islets, and a doctor from the Fox Islands, across the Bay, must be had. A small schooner, used as a passenger and freight packet to more distant Rockland, lay frozen in near the end of "the Thoroughfare." Willing men with axes worked desperately at cutting a channel for her to open water and just at night she made sail for the large settlement of



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Carver's Harbor where a doctor was to be found, but it was ten hours before the terribly wounded man received medical attention. Yet he soon recovered and helped by an ingenious contrivance of the blacksmith, attached to the stump of his arm, eventually resumed the work of pulling heavy lobster pots, alone, in his "pea-pod." This, and many other circumstances of somewhat similar nature, may serve partly to show why Isle au Haut became so depopulated.

On all sides, especially on the east side, the island was surrounded by rocky shoals and bare ledges, over which the sea broke with thundering roar. On Isle au Haut, as upon the northern coast, and on board vessels, the rumbling noise of the sea, charging upon rocky shores, was universally known as the "rote." Every man on vessels approaching shore, when weather was so often "thick-o'-fog," listened intently to "make the rote" on various ledges or islands as a means of identifying position. To all seamen nearing Penobscot Bay from the eastward, in bad weather, "making" the extra heavy boom of rote on "Isle o' Holt," was a distinct relief as greatly helping to avoid numerous coming, though less prominent, dangers. In winter the rote's eternal monotone was more or less in evidence at "the Thoroughfare," but in long, heavy storms it tenfold increased until vying with the noise of the howling gale. There were those in "the Thoroughfare" who claimed to be able to tell, by the distant cannon-like report and actual jarring of the land, just the moment when some mountainous sea broke on certain spots on the east side, fully three miles away.



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At all times of year, Isle au Haut felt much less than its share of sunlight. Weeks of dense fog, weather always known as "thick-o'-fog," often continued in the summer. Even more obscuring than fog were winter days when driving wind, "thick-o'-snow," shut out all view except within a few feet. Yet more completely blinding, if possible, than fog or snow, were winter days, sunny and clear over head, but cold enough to make the warmer salt water, of bay and harbor, steam so that all work at lobstering was suspended. In oilskins, sou'westers, red "kag boots," and thick, knitted white mittens or "nippers," the lobstermen faced rain, fog, and snow, to some purpose; but impenetrable masses of steam, constantly rising and blowing in clouds over the water, made fair and cold winter days of "thick-o'-vapor," most detested and paralyzing of all.

Taken altogether, it is a small wonder that with the old business of deep-sea fishing centered in larger ports on the main, isolation and climate drove hundreds to leave before summer residents proved the salvation of Isle au Haut. In all parts of the island, caved-in cellar holes, filled with weeds and sumacs, but often still guarded over by spreading groups of ever-faithful "laylocks," marked the dwelling places of old settlers.

Many large clearings, in the thick growth of pointed trees, though much overgrown with alders and encroached upon by woods, still showing the locations of gardens and farms. Abandoned houses, gray as the near-by ledges, often without doors or window frames, but showing fluttering patches of gay paper on crumbling walls, were met with, in most lonely spots, where the souging of wind in the



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trees, the cawing of crows, the raucous cries of gulls, and the dull rumbling of the "rote," were the principal sounds to be heard.

In some parts of the island for at least half the days in the year, and sometimes day and night for weeks at a stretch, cold fog blotted everything from sight and fell in drops of water from buildings and trees. Why generations, able to leave, ever lived there at all, and not why people left the island, is the question that remains unsolved.

Summer visitors soon proved, at least as far as Isle au Haut was concerned, they were to be of decided benefit to the island. Not at all inclined to "h'ist taxes," as feared, a stock company of wealthy Boston, New York, and Philadelphia members, bought immense tracts of land, ordered cargo after cargo of lumber, on schooners from Bangor, and sent granite from quarries at Deer Isle. A solid wharf was built on the company's land at Point Lookout, a large club house was erected, with commodious cottages owned by club members, and for the first time in the island's history a real road was constructed. This extended only a couple of miles to "the Thoroughfare," but yearly was followed by others, until all the shores of Isle au Haut became accessible by horse and carriage.

In planning, executing and superintending all work, the versatile postmaster became invaluable to club members and was truly "the man of the hour." The blacksmith was kept busy making fire sets, grills and ornamental iron work of endless variety, meantime obliged to "haul teeth" by lamplight. As "all around men," the postmaster, and his



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brother, the blacksmith, were especially noted, even in this isolated little settlement, where, of necessity, many such existed. The barber turned painter, glazier and interior decorator, though on Sundays he was still open to visitors who wished a shave, a hair cut, a drink of spruce beer, a tintype, or oval-shaped, cabinet-sized photographs of themselves.

The policy of the Point Lookout Club was long a puzzlement to residents. Large areas of wild land, plentifully strewn with boulders, often of enormous size, but land so far only attractive to "plummers," practically worthless old houses with worn-out farms, and acres upon acres of spruce-covered woodlots on the mountainside, were continually bought up by the "club folks," who certainly made no apparent effort to bring more "rusticators." Already nearly half the island had passed into strange hands and former owners generally took long awaited opportunity to get away.

So far from wishing to "talk up" Isle au Haut, or in any way to bring it into prominence as a summer resort, the powers at the Club actually headed off the project of having a steamer touch at the new stone pier when running her regular route along the coast. This sort of thing was at first beyond conception to most dwellers, but by degrees it came to be understood that the common herd of "boarders" was not wanted and that those wishing to make a protracted stay must measure up to a certain standard.

Cards of invitation, not too easily obtainable, were required at the Club, and only cottages of a certain cost



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could be built. These "rusticators" were not "plummers," but were persons who did not in the least desire the company of tourists or boarders. It was a breed heretofore unknown on the island.

At first, a large and speedy steam launch connected with the Boston steamer at the nearest point, but later, a still larger and more luxurious one was added. No fare was charged and so not coming under the law relating to common carriers, the well-instructed island captains were able to show discrimination in accepting passengers. Peddlers were ruled out, while others, perhaps seeking board at different spots or possibly rating as "mere plummers," were told that this was a private yacht and that the mail carrier would attend to their wants on his somewhat uncertain trips in his sloop. In parenthesis it may be said, that after leaving the Club's launch, at Isle au Haut, but before leaving the wharf, the collecting of customary fares was not overlooked.

To some extent, however, less exclusive people than those at Point Lookout, in one way or another found access to the island and obtained board at various houses in "the Thoroughfare," where they enjoyed vacations in shirt-sleeves, with a notable absence of distinguishing male or female sport clothes.

It was owing to the "club folks," however, that Isle au Haut enjoyed a new era of prosperity. Through them, in various ways, many men found paying employment both in summer and in winter, though ready to fall back on lobstering at any time. Through the energy of one cottager a small, stone, town hall, with well-stocked library, was



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built at "the Thoroughfare." Other cottagers built a pretty parsonage near the church and practically paid the salary of a combination minister and doctor to reside there, the year through, eking out his income by medical services, long needed.

New cottages, piers and roads were built. The school-house at "the Thoroughfare," not by any means needing enlargement, was fully repaired inside and out, newly painted and inscribed "Winsome School," in honor of a yacht, whose widely known owner, Charles Francis Adams, frequented the clubhouse and footed all bills for improvements.

The postmaster built for himself a stable, stocked with saddle and driving horses, which was well patronized in summer, though in winter, as he admitted, they went far toward "eating their heads off." Club members ransacked the island for antiques and often made surprising finds, though to their credit, be it said, few families were willing to sell old furniture and dishes at any price. Stowed away in cupboards sometimes were to be found chinaware held as priceless relics of the long bygone days when Isle au Haut sent its own vessels across seas.

There were other and larger islands than Isle au Haut, in Penobscot Bay, but none so isolated and at times so completely shut off from the outside world. Deer Isle, six miles up the Bay, was quite thickly populated, and being separated from the main only by a narrow part of Egge-moggan Reach, was practically mainland itself. Except in the very early years of sailing craft, it enjoyed regular steam communication in various directions, and the granite



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quarries, at its lower end, vied with those of Mount Waldo, on "Bangor River," in shipping stone to Boston and further west. The quarries of Deer Isle, in particular, employed a class of ancient fishing schooners which gave rise to the common remark that when a vessel grew too old for even lumber coasting out of Bangor, or carrying wood for burning in Rockland lime kilns, she was considered none too ripe for the stone business, and was often loaded "scuppers to," with paving or huge blocks of granite. Those remembering the ex-fishing schooners *Accumulator*, *Cordova*, *Valparaiso*, *Black Warrior*, and many others, would be the last to dispute this.

Of late years, contending with the growing use of cement, many small quarries, on Bay and River, have been abandoned outright, or their output greatly reduced. The once familiar sight of derricks and small schooners loading stone at points where there was the scantiest shelter and only a house or two existed, is now a thing of the past. Granite quarrying is extensively carried on, but the business has been much concentrated and the product is mostly shipped in lighters or barges towed by steam.

Long Island, dividing the Bay, and the two large Fox Islands, all well populated, were once deeply interested in vessel property of all kinds and were on regular steamboat routes. Such places felt the decadence of shipping equally with Isle au Haut, but were much earlier revived by the coming of more or less affluent and philanthropic summer visitors.

The radical change in the occupation of many coast dwellers presents a serious question in the effect it is



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more than likely to have upon their characters. Instead of the rough but independent sea-going life of their forefathers, most young men on the coast, today, are constantly looking for a shore job among summer residents, with a position as chauffeur much preferred. Almost any menial job about the estate of a summer resident, offering not too hard labor and with the possibility of tips, is more than acceptable. The old-time scorn of tips, as being somewhat degrading and wholly un-American, is now very rarely to be detected in either sex, and when encountered, comes as a refreshing surprise. Of course this sort of thing is by no means confined to the coast, but it is here more noticeable when contrasted with the former life of adventure and constant struggle with the elements.



## VI æ Lobster Sloops and Tidal Bores

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THE MANY lobster sloops owned at Isle au Haut and the hundreds of such craft used upon the entire coast of Maine, were of the same general model and rig. No boats of the sort have been built for thirty years or more, and the type is extinct in the lobstering business, though "nail-sick" old boats with top timbers not too soft from decay, are constantly being "repaired-up" and converted into yachts or used by old men for taking out sailing parties. There is still a surprising number of summer visitors not speed mad, to whom sailing boats are much preferable to the noise, vibration and smell of motor boats.

Lobster sloops being broad of beam, sail on their bottoms instead of their sides, as is apt to be the case with modern, narrow sailing yachts, depending for stability solely upon deeply hung fins of iron or lead. Sailing parties



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could find comfortable space in the large standing rooms of the old sloops, which would oftener be refastened and kept in use but for the difficulty of finding any but old men capable of handling sailing craft in these days of universal gasoline.

The town of Friendship, in Muskongus Bay, together with several surrounding villages, produced generations of small sloop builders, and though their craft were more or less imitated at all points of the coast, the neighborhood of Friendship launched so many especially well designed for lobstering that these boats became generally and favorably known as "Friendship Sloops."

Earlier boats of this class were built of much better material than was easily obtained in later years. It was too far north for genuine white oak to flourish in any quantities, and though this invaluable wood was used as long as possible for frames, sternposts, stems and keel, the much more common second-growth red oak generally took the place of white oak. Red oak of the requisite quality is a strong wood admitting of much bending, though greatly exceeded by New England white oak in durability. It is worthy of notice that all oak used in the construction of Friendship craft was and still is called "white oak," but with nearly thirty varieties of oak growing in the country and comparatively few knowing the wide difference between them, the term "white oak" could easily be stretched.

Within recent years a large motor-driven fishing boat was built to order in the Friendship region, and the owner proudly claimed that, according to contract, the handsome



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craft was not only framed but planked with the best of white oak. Of "square-head" descent, the skipper was widely known as an expert "fish-killer," but was no judge of wood. As a matter of fact the new craft had not the smallest bit of real white oak, from stem to stern, and in this resembled many other modern boats built in the same locality.

Penobscot Bay and Isle au Haut at one time possessed a large share of these famous little boats, and probably a greater number of them than could be found on any similar extent of coast. Boat builders themselves were often completely at loggerheads over the exact variety of oak in their shops, and, especially in distinguishing white from red oak, relied more upon color and texture of bark than upon that of bared wood. In fact, the highest grade of white oak had a gray-blue tinge and such trees being generally isolated, gave rise to the familiar laudatory expression, "pasture oak, blue as a whetstone and tougher than biled owl." Red oak was slightly referred to, by knowing ones, as "sour oak," or by a still more disparaging term not to be printed. Live oak, the finest of oaks and in a class by itself, was brought in logs from the South to navy yards, and put into timber docks, where it sank like lead and often remained for years till thoroughly seasoned by salt water. It was not only expensive, but notoriously hard to work, and none was used in lobster sloops.

A lobster sloop built at Friendship, or thereabouts, was much to be desired, and though the fastest sloop owned at Isle au Haut had been built from a near Friendship model, far out at sea upon the bare little island of Matini-



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cus, only one other Matinicus-built lobster boat was owned at "the Thoroughfare."

"Pea-pods" galore and half a dozen yachts were built at Isle au Haut, but it was thought the thing to own a Friendship-built lobster sloop, if only for the name of it. A few details may be given concerning a craft fresh from a boat shop at Friendship, and as if to stamp identity beyond question, having the builder's name carved on the long figurehead. She was twenty-eight feet six inches overall, with slight overhang; nine feet, six inches beam; and about five feet draft of water, which may be taken as average figures for lobster sloops of this size. The floor was decidedly concave. As a comparatively new thing, she was of "set-work," or smooth-seam planking, instead of the lapstreak, "clinker-built" type heretofore so common. Another innovation was shrouds upon the masts, though these were mainly for convenience in hanging side lights, and carefully kept slack to avoid, as was said, any "cramping" of the boat in a seaway.

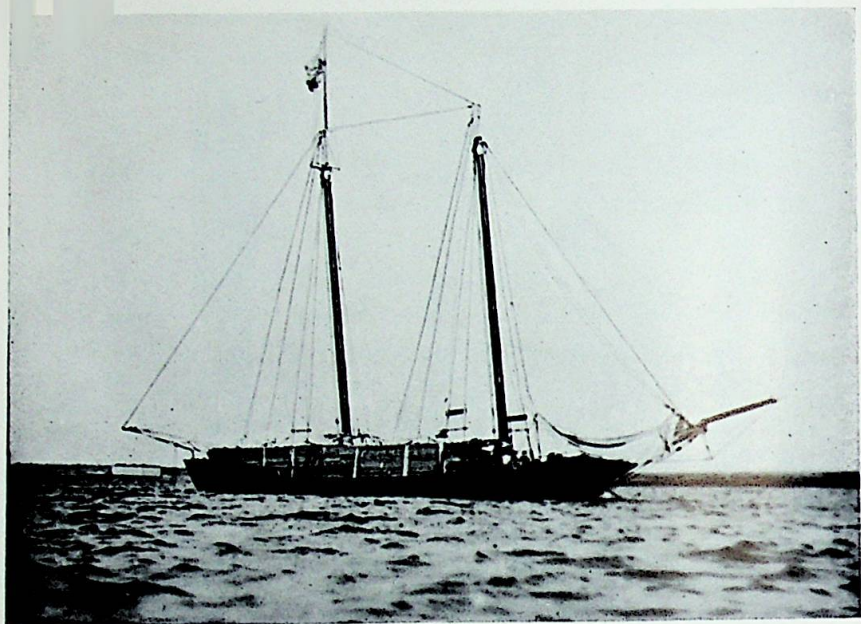
It might be thought, however, that the outrageously heavy mast would be more of a "cramp" than taut shrouds on a lighter one. The mast, in a boat of this size, would be nine inches in diameter at the deck-partners and well calculated to stand any strain without the support of shrouds, which many would not have on any account. The ideal mast should be of "island spruce," or, if not grown upon an island, at least close to the seacoast, as such trees were thought tougher than those of more luxuriant growth in forests inland. If the stick had in it a slight twist and a sprinkling of small knots, so much the better, as denoting





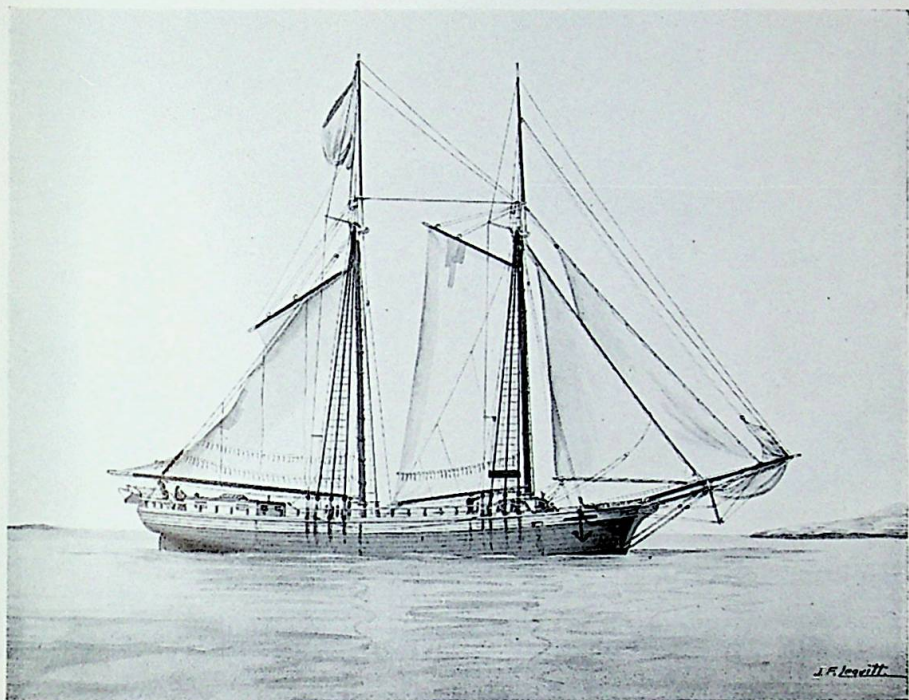
A St. John, New Brunswick, wood-boat. From a photograph made in 1907.





Schooner *Polly*, lying in Portland Harbor about 1905, loaded with lumber. She also was employed in the lime trade. Built as a sloop in the shipyard of Richard Currier at Amesbury, Massachusetts, in 1805. Rebuilt by Jonathan Tinker on Tinker's Island, Bluehill Bay, in 1850 and rerigged as a schooner. Lived until well over one hundred years old and was the oldest vessel under American registry.





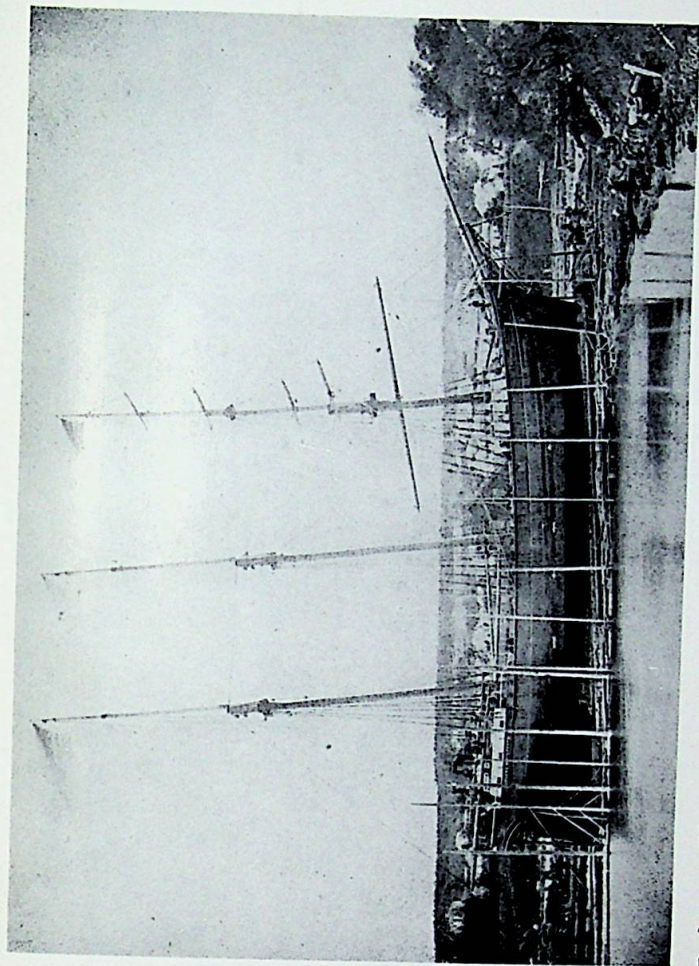
Lime schooner *Morris & Cliff*, ex *Sam Weller*. From a water color by John F. Leavitt.  
Courtesy Peabody Museum of Salem.





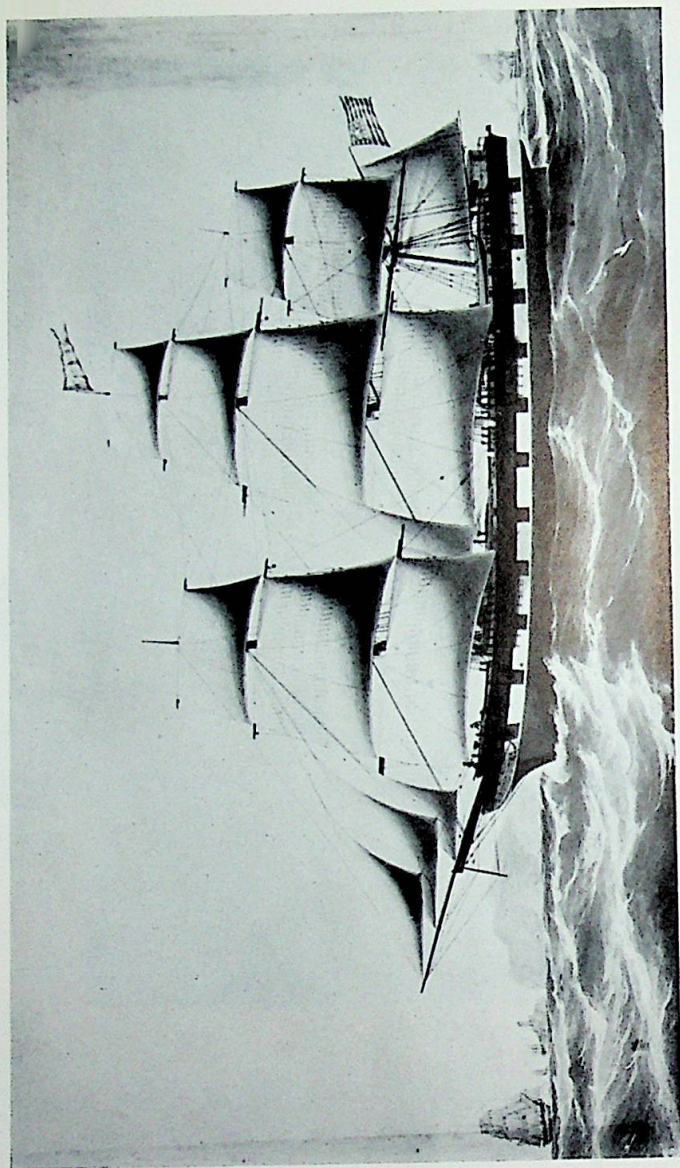
Schooner loading kiln wood at Hampden, Maine, on the Penobscot River.





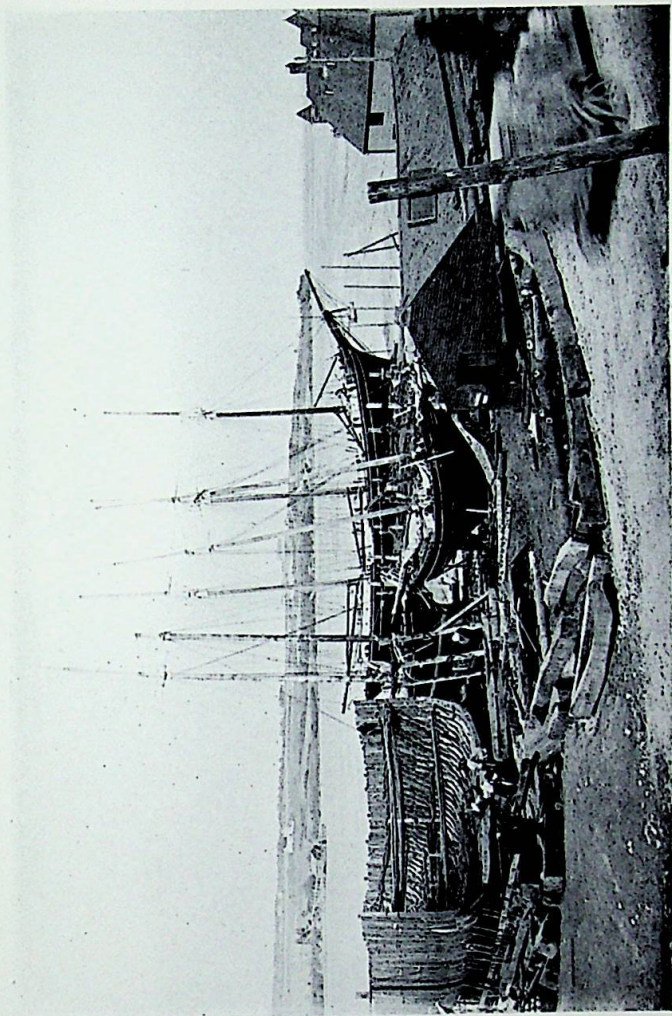
Barkentine *Clara E. McGilbery*, 403 tons, built at Searsport, in 1873. On the stocks ready for launching. Lost on the coast of South Carolina in 1893.





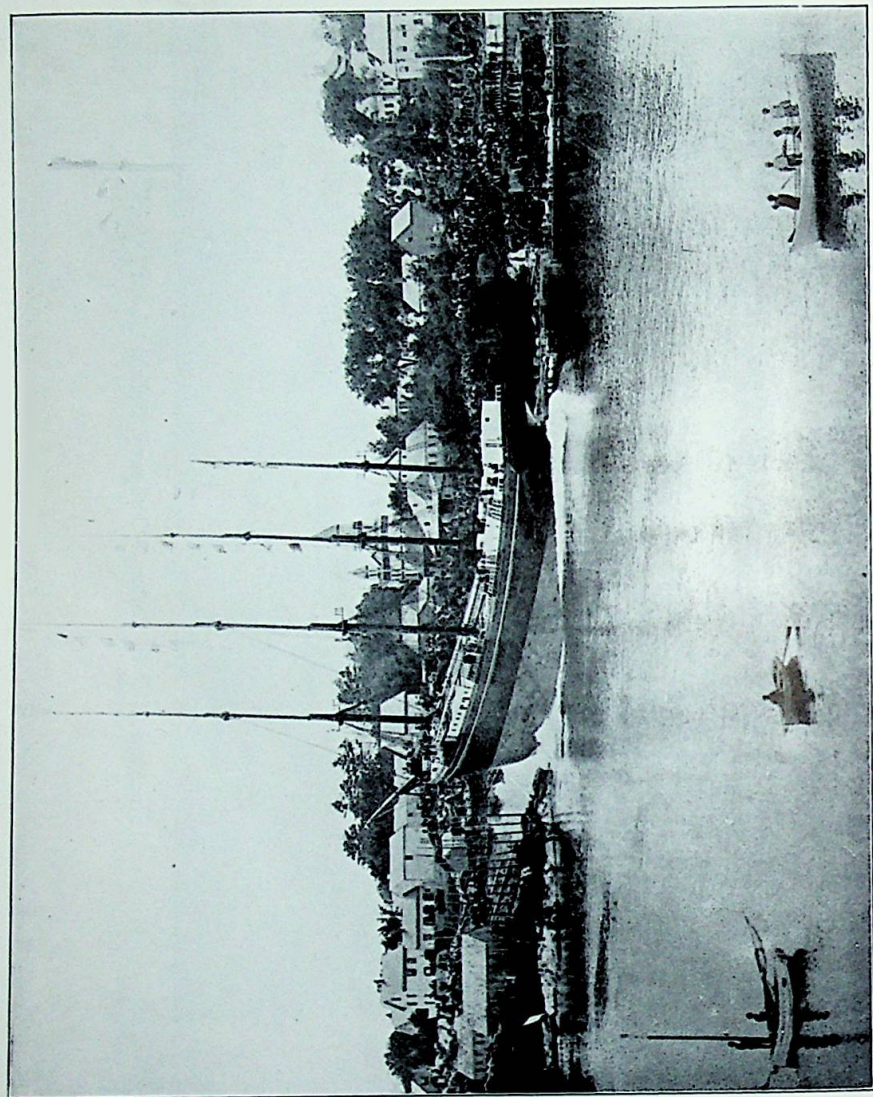
Ship *William Witherle*, 875 tons, built at Castine in 1851. From a painting in the possession of William Witherle Lawrence.





Shipyards of C. P. Carter & Company, Belfast, about 1885.





Ship *Frederick Billings*, 2497 tons, built at Rockport, Maine, in 1885. The second four-masted ship built in the United States and the largest square-rigged vessel ever built on Penobscot waters.



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still greater toughness. It was stepped far forward so that the boat would readily pay off when pulling a gang of pots without any jib set.

A large and deep standing room was necessary for loading dozens of lobster pots, as much width of deck outside the washboards was an objection when hauling pots over the side. For the same reason a high washboard was not used, and the short cabin trunk, forward, was commonly no higher than the washboard. In the cabin or cuddy, there was always a stove for heating and cooking facilities, and bunks for sleeping the two men.

In spite of the large standing room draining directly into the boat's bottom, lobster catchers had the greatest faith in their craft; and one hot-headed young man once foolishly boasted that "it never blowed so hard in God's world" that he could not work the *Yankee Maid* to windward. Later, though, after having been driven miles to leeward, under bare poles, he had good occasion to eat his words.

Usually one of the first things done when these boats were to be used for pleasure, was to extend the cabin trunk aft and raise the standing-room floor till it could be made self-bailing. With such alterations no better craft of the size could be found. Frames were ample in dimensions for fastening the few butts without the use of "butt-straps," and were seldom over six inches apart. The wale-streak of planking, and one or two beneath it, were of oak, the better to withstand chafing from hauling pots. Below this, old growth white pine, clear of sap, or native cedar, an inch or more in thickness, made a planking which would out-



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last the frame or the galvanized iron fastenings. The latter prevented Friendship lobster boats from rating as first-class in construction, no matter how good the stock, and though the galvanizing on wrought iron boat nails varied greatly in durability, the best of such fastenings would seldom compare with copper going through the timbers and securely riveted over burrs. There was an absurd idea, however, among lobster men, that copper fastening would "work loose" in time, and the use of galvanized iron was generally adhered to, though often to their sorrow.

As showing how much galvanizing varied in effectiveness, the fragments of a boat wrecked when twenty-three years old, gave no trace of rust in any portion. On the other hand, several small craft less than half that age, showed rust streaking down the sides from each fastening, and were in a fair way to become permanently "nail-sick." An instance is recalled when such a sloop, being jumped into what was called a "lump of a head-beat sea," started off a butt in the planking and sank so quickly that the two men in her sprang into the "pea-pod," and so saved their lives, though nothing else.

The presence of many lobster sloops in the locality was directly responsible for the irregular visits to "the Thor-oughfare," of a unique character, called J. Ellingwood Stubbs. He was, by a few, regarded as a freak, but others considered him entitled to respect by reason of his unusual gifts. Without having had a lesson in his life, it was said that he could "turn to and by eye alone, draw you off anything from a portrait nach'el as life, to land sceneries,



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sea views or flower pieces." Moreover, all work was guaranteed to be strictly hand painted.

The man arrived alone, from a town on the Penobscot River, in a fantastically carved, gilded, striped and otherwise decorated sloop of his own construction, prominently bearing, both fore and aft, the name *Lola Montez*. When often asked the meaning of this name, he took no pains to conceal a pitying contempt for those who had never even heard of the spitfire stage beauty of former days. Before leaving his boat to come ashore, the suit of butcher's frocking, commonly used by lobstermen, was exchanged for a much-worn velveteen jacket, a huge felt hat and a flowing black tie, which, with locks far over a greasy collar, gave the desired artistic effect. As an all round artist, J. Ellingwood Stubbs proclaimed himself on all occasions and intended to leave no doubt upon the matter, though the main object of his visits to "the Thoroughfare," was the general furbishing-up of Friendship lobster sloops.

A universal feature of these boats was a figurehead extending more than half the length of the bowsprit, and this, with its carved scrolls or vines, often the especial pride of owners, received due attention from the visitor. They were likely to be marred or broken outright by the sea, and the critical eye of the artist quickly found any defect that he might remedy by paint or with a few essential carving tools aided by a sharp jackknife.

Lobster sloops were often shored upright upon a bit of smooth beach, and given over to Stubbs for the doctoring up of figureheads, the skilful applying of stripes, and



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the slick lettering of names for which he was especially famed. If gold leaf were to be used, wind screens of canvas were insisted upon, and planks raised upon boxes for the convenience of the artist-workman. All this was viewed askance by the barber, who also did such work, but without the attention given the artist Stubbs.

In the cabin of his boat he exhibited a few samples of more artistic work, prominent among them being a dreamy scene representing a rainbow and a blood-red setting sun seen from shore between stately tree trunks and both reflected in a glassy sea. Rainbows, moonlight and lighthouses were often depicted under unusual conditions, but the artist told of one large masterpiece at his home which, in its combination of rainbow, moonlight, setting sun and lighthouses, plainly showed that at least in complete indifference to natural laws J. E. Stubbs could easily hold his own with certain works of the famous J. M. W. Turner, R.A.

Mention having been made of a well-known landscape painter then staying a mile distant at the newly built clubhouse, Mr. Stubbs, while deftly skinning a mess of cunners for supper, said he knew that a "brother brush" was stopping down there, but that so far, lack of time alone had prevented the intended call upon him.

Head Harbor, at the extreme southern end of Isle au Haut, was considered an especially dangerous anchorage place. One reason for this bad repute was the rocky nature of its bottom, affording uncertain holding for anchors and commonly known to seafarers by the significant epithet of "foul ground." Besides this, Head Harbor lies open to all



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winds on the southern board, though, owing to its comparative narrowness, less sea works in than might be expected. Still, in all such gales enough sea and wind were felt to bring Head Harbor well into the list of "one-sided" harbors, where mariners generally could not turn in at night and take solid comfort of their lives.

Since Head Harbor makes into the island, for some distance, in a squarely northeast direction, and is surrounded by notably high land, it might be thought to form a perfect shelter for vessels in storms coming from that quarter; but it is in those longest and most to be feared northeast gales that the harbor shows its worst features. Luckily, violent northeast storms were uncommon in summer, but at other times of the year, a "no'th-easter" often prevailed for days and after raging for perhaps twenty-four hours, created the dreaded undertow or "bores" which, at short intervals, rushed in and out of Head Harbor with such force as to make it wholly untenable for anchored craft.

It should be understood that "bores," the effect of undertow, produced only in long continued northeast storms, were not in the least coincident with the much more frequent onrush of even the most gigantic ocean surges. In harbors, for some mysterious reason subject, during great storms, to irregular flooding and draining by inscrutable undertow, no anchored vessel, however much sheltered, could be safe. The irresistible force of an incoming "bore" might set her directly against the wind over both anchors, with great danger of tripping one or both cables. On the reverse process of running out, the sucking current, then



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aided by wind, caused the vessel to set back on ground tackle, with ominous snap and jerking strain upon windlass.

What caused the danger of undertow in some harbors and little or none in others, of apparently similar location, was as much a question as what caused the phenomenally high tides in upper "Bangor River." Duck Harbor, on the west side of Isle au Haut, also extended into the island in a northeast direction and had a much wider entrance than Head Harbor, but though long northeast storms might raise a mighty swell outside, no trouble from undertow was known there. Isle au Haut Thoroughfare itself, reaching northeast and southwest, and at high tide open at both ends, should have been among those worst infested by undertow, yet vessels of all sizes and rigs had, for years and at all seasons, ridden in it safely. To say, however, that "the Thoroughfare" was always entirely free from undertow, would not be strictly true.

Toward the last of August, 1890, there occurred three memorable days of clear and almost calm weather, so warm that even elderly womenfolks at the Club, laid aside warm, extra wraps, and lobstermen cast off their constantly worn, apron-like "barvels," of yellow oilskin, tore shirts wide open, but with never a thought of shedding high "kag boots" of leather, gasped and swore without ceasing. In the store on the wharf, the old ex-seaman proprietor, beyond all thought of selling "W. I. Goods and Groceries," lay stretched at full length upon the counter, and continually mopping his streaming face with a red cotton bandanna, in deep though weakened tones, sol-



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emly declared that his Maker would surely "call him aft," if this weather hung on much longer. Incidentally, a thermometer registered at the time the wilting heat of seventy-six degrees.

Another rare phenomenon marked this calm spell of weather at Isle au Haut. Outside only occasional cat's-paws of wind ruffled the water, yet an ocean swell suddenly began running and soon outrivaled anything of the sort, even in winter storms, known to the oldest resident. Not only was there a booming tumult of "rote," on shore and ledges, all about the island, but lobstermen afterward recited wild tales of seeing the monstrous swell break in unbelievable spots. The old, yet vigorous, mail carrier, excitedly vowed that the sea broke on a certain sunken ledge where in his forty years of experience he had never seen the like before. All the while there was so little wind that one day it was half-past ten at night before, in his faithful "pea-pod," he towed his sloop into "the Thoroughfare" and delivered the mail.

It was at this time that unmistakable undertow made itself felt in Isle au Haut Thoroughfare. Lobster sloops tugged hard at moorings near either shore. The tide suddenly rose several feet, only to fall and rise again. It purled and swished around old cob wharves in a mysterious manner, but did no actual damage except at the sheltered stone pier, recently built close to the Club House on Point Lookout.

Alongside this pier and held fast by chains to it and the shore, was a long float-stage holding a dozen rowboats and used as a convenient landing place for all small craft.



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At high tide, intermittent, though by no means full-fledged, "bores," surged up through "the Thoroughfare," with force enough to break several of these chains and generally play ducks and drakes with landing facilities in the usually quiet water of the Club House pier.

It was obvious that somewhere in the North Atlantic an unusually severe gale had occurred, but, though no report of any such was ever made, it served to bring up the vexing old question.

Storms coming from the northeast direction could not be especially conducive to undertow except from the fact that they are, by all odds, the longest of any coming from the Atlantic. The longest northeast gale recorded on our coast occurred in April, 1851, when for eleven days in succession the wind blew furiously from this quarter and raised an undertow which, with other great damage done, carried away the lighthouse on Minot's Ledge in Massachusetts Bay.

Any out wind, that is, one coming from the ocean, would be fully as destructive, if long continued, but a southeaster, known as likely to be especially vicious while it lasted, was luckily of comparatively short duration. A wicked sea might be and commonly was created, but undertow and "bores" depended upon long-drawn-out storms for full development.

As a good example of a much-frequented harbor of refuge, at certain times subject to undertow, Portsmouth lower harbor may be cited. Like most harbors on the coast of northern New England, it extends in a general northeast and southwest direction, affording excellent protec-



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tion from wind in northeast gales. Nevertheless, it was held in poor repute on account of strong tides and, at times, well-grounded suspicion of undertow. The lower harbor, into which emptied the wide Piscataqua River, with the old city of Portsmouth three miles up-stream, contains several islands among which vessels often crowded for better shelter than was afforded by the harbor proper. There are also a number of deep inlets and so-called "cricks," where in former times tiers of coasters and fishermen wintered in spite of undertow, well known to surge up indentations in the harbor, much further than their location.

The lower harbor, itself noted for its depth of water and also as being a tide hole, very rarely froze over, but unless inlets happened at the time to be well barricaded by heavy ice, wintering vessels, no matter how well secured and watched, often had troublous experiences from inroads of undertow. Those familiar with the place, in later years, have no reason to doubt any tales told upon this matter.

An island bare of everything but two sagging old buildings and the remains of a wharf, stood in close proximity to the mainland. It was an island only at top of tide and was connected with the mainland by a wide stone causeway, so bridge-like that people and teams could cross dry-shod on the highest run of tides. In old days covered with fish flakes and noisy from men and women "making fish," the island always held its ancient name of "the fish yard," and up to within twenty years or so, was still used by the last breed of weir men for drying and mending nets.



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The ponderous causeway was also intended as a break-water to partially prevent undertow from reaching the cove in which numbers of vessels were accustomed to winter. During the memorable northeast gale of 1897, in which the Boston-Portland steamer *Portland* foundered, with loss of everyone on board, "bores" of the worst description intermittently rushed from the lower harbor, and with much foam and roar, poured over the causeway to the depth of several feet. A few minutes after the furious inrush had subsided, water in the cove then rose rapidly and deeply submerging the causeway, in a veritable waterfall poured over it in the opposite direction. This alternate process of swiftly running in and out, continued for hours during the great gale and showed plainly how, in winter storms of years past, massive cakes of ice had swept the upper layer of rocks from the causeway and left the shore much cluttered with them on either side.

Another forcible illustration of undertow and "bores" connected with the "*Portland* breeze," was shown in a neighboring creek, where, though it was partially protected by ledges and at some distance inland, "bores" got in their work more effectively. On the inner end of a dilapidated cob wharf, filled in with stone, had been built a fish house in which the owner and others made lobster pots, baited up trawls, and otherwise passed much time. It was not a heavy nor substantial affair, but it contained a stove, several broken-down chairs and an uninviting looking bunk, for those feeling it incumbent on them to turn in and sleep off a drunk. For half a dozen or more years it had served its purpose without interruption but, in this



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storm, "bores" ran up the creek from the outer harbor, flooding the old wharf and fish house so that the latter showed alarming signs of fetching adrift. Between intervals of "bores," lines were hurriedly, though none too soon made fast to the building, for at high tide, that night, the whole outfit was sucked overboard, by outgoing "bores," and in the howling northeaster, would have gone out to sea but for stout lines running to trees and well secured by the ever trustworthy "round turn and two half hitches."

This digression leads many miles away from Penobscot Bay and "Bangor River," but may help give a better idea of what the word "undertow" means to seafarers and regular coast residents. It is, in all respects, a very different thing from the comparatively slight suction caused by each receding wave on shore and viewed with almost superstitious dread by bathers during the hot season.



## VII    Smugglers and Wreckers

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NOTICEABLE in the early eighties, hauled far up at a tumble-down wharf on the shore of Isle au Haut Thoroughfare and afloat only at high water, was the once trim little schooner *Alpha*. Though at first in good repair, her sails were left unbent until badly "stuck" with mildew, then they mysteriously found their way into the holds of traders visiting this and other harbors, and whose skippers were well known to ask no questions. Later on, running rigging, either much stranded or with fagged-out ends streaming broad-off in the nearly incessant fresh "fog breeze" peculiar to this sea-girt island, was unrove from blocks and with them disposed of to some "trader" specializing in any kind of material from frequent wrecks on the coast.

Sometimes, however, this business was rudely interfered with by the wreck-masters appointed at many points in



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those flourishing days of traffic by sea. The *Alpha's* cabin was later rifled of its contents, her spars became gray from weather, the paint faded or peeled off in flakes, and each year she more and more took on the forlorn look of an abandoned hulk.

Fully aware of what was going on, some strange kink in the mind of the former owner's widow, made her always refuse point blank to benefit herself by the sale of so much as a rope-yarn from the vessel. Naturally this unusual attitude on the woman's part was thought strange and altogether provoking. It was called no less than a crime to let a handy little craft, which might be readily sold as fit to engage in any of half a dozen occupations, go to complete wrack and ruin. She would make a "grand good little bricker"; as a "kiln-wooder" she would easily lug forty cords of wood to the Rockland lime kilns; she could "tend out" on fish weirs, or make good money as a freighter between ports in the Bay and vicinity; but since the pig-headed old woman would not sell a thing, it would serve her only good and right if everything down to the last timber-head was stolen.

Close inquiry into the queer matter, however, while offering no satisfactory solution to the woman's conduct, disclosed a story characteristic of the time, but ending in a tragedy which long cast gloom over the entire island, and indeed over many other islands and coast communities.

Captain Eben Carter, or as he was universally known, Uncle Eb, owned the schooner *Alpha* for many years and apparently made a comfortable living in her. Uncle Eb was descended from the earliest settlers and with his wife



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and sister-in-law, lived in the best house on the island. It was built at the time when Isle au Haut had foreign commerce of its own and shipmasters could well afford to build sturdy, comfortable homes. Eben Carter, however, chose neither to go to sea for a livelihood, to go fishing, nor to remain long in the Penobscot River lumber trade, which, in that day, claimed large numbers in the vicinity. For some years he served in all three branches of sea life and then having a strong leaning in quite another line, bought the schooner *Alpha*, already known as a "slippery" or fast sailing and able little vessel. After certain well-thought-out preparations, in her he went boldly into the regular business of smuggling brandy, gloves and silks from the Maritime Provinces, in which traffic, for many years, he proved to be no less slippery than his craft. Many goods had already been secretly brought in vessels from the same quarter, but so far as is known, the *Alpha* was the first to make smuggling a regular occupation. Strangely enough the business carried with it no stigma whatever, either at Isle au Haut or numerous other points on the northern coast, which were often necessary to visit on his trips.

Notably open-handed in frequent cases of need, Uncle Eb was beloved by young and old and all seemed anxious to be of help to him when possible. Dependent upon the good will of numerous friends, an elaborate system of day and night signals was established, not only upon various points of Isle au Haut, but on several sparsely inhabited islands, so that the *Alpha* was thoroughly warned when it was safe to approach and when it was best to make herself scarce.



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Isle au Haut had innumerable excellent spots for leaving and hiding goods, or for again shipping them when desirable. It lay nearly twenty miles from the nearest mainland, as the crow flies, and over six miles from the nearest steamboat route. It was surrounded by dangerous ledges, many of them sunken, and though charts marked some of these, many more were known to be unmarked in any way, and only showed when in heavy weather some mountainous sea broke over them.

The small topsail revenue schooner *Toucey* had been stationed at Castine since 1861. At that town, in 1865, was rebuilt the revenue cutter *J. C. Dobbin*, of 173 tons, built at Somerset, Me., in 1853, and given this pretty name in honor of the former Secretary of the Navy. She was the last revenue cutter using sails, only, ever on this coast. She was originally rigged as a topsail schooner, but ever with the new and popular, purely "fore-and-aft" rig, given at the time of rebuilding, and which enabled sailing considerably nearer the wind, she was, in many ways, poorly adapted to the task of patrolling the coast from Portland to Eastport, Maine. A deep, "long-legged" vessel, she was considered "dull," except in a heavy wind, and her great draft of water was much of a handicap on the ledge- and fog-infested waters of the northern coast. As for chasing up smaller craft, having skippers familiar with the hundreds of inlets, often connected with each other, men perfectly at home among the many islands and intricate channels of the cut-up coast, vessels like the sailing revenue cutter *Dobbin*, were at a great disadvantage. Uncle Eb especially, in the nimble little *Alpha*, with his



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intimate knowledge and many helpers on shore, did not take this revenue cutter business too seriously.

The *Dobbin* was followed by the brig-rigged steamer *Woodbury*. The steamers *McCulloch* and *Dallas* often called at Castine, but big cutters, either sail or steam, did not bother greatly. The Custom House for the district being at Castine, these revenue vessels had here permanent moorings, but spent much of the time lying alongside a wharf where it was easier for officers and men to show their spick and span uniforms at various social functions in the old town. It is true that revenue officers several times visited Isle au Haut, and at least went through the form of a search for Uncle Eb, but he never happened to be at home on these occasions, nor could the least scrap of information concerning him or his whereabouts ever be obtained.

Captains of large and cumbersome revenue craft were doubtless glad to get back into clearer waters before being caught in one of the sudden dense fogs to be expected in this region, when very likely the sun might be shining only a few miles up the Bay. At any rate searches were not long nor thorough and Uncle Eb continued to practice his calling without serious interruption for many years.

In the fall of 1874 a young girl from Deer Isle was engaged to teach school in "the Thoroughfare." She obtained board at the near-by Carter homestead and liked the family greatly. She related how, on many winter evenings, his favorite game of backgammon was played, and how strangely his inveterate habit of swearing contrasted with his mildness of manner and his low, drawling voice.



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During a game, being admonished by his wife not to swear so incessantly, a habit universal among the men of the island, he would, for a time, try hard to curb profane speech, by merely exclaiming, "Damn, damn, double-damnation." Later on this mild variety of swearing was reserved for use when conversing with summer visitors of the gentler sex, for Uncle Eb was by no means bashful in their presence and liked as much a chance to talk with them as they did to hear him relate sundry wondrous tales.

It was about 1880 that there arrived on the island a newly married couple hailing from a western city, and wishing some out-of-the-way spot in which to pass their honeymoon. They were lucky to find accommodations at the comfortable home of Uncle Eb. They were most enthusiastic over Isle au Haut, its location, and the primitive conditions then prevailing, but especially fell in love with "boat sailing." Neither knew anything of the art so at first hired a thirty-foot lobster sloop with a man to take them out on short sails in the Bay, both boat and man being highly recommended by their host. In a very short time they determined that the island was to be their future summer home, but that a boat of their very own was a real necessity for happiness. A suitable bargain having been arranged, under the advice of Uncle Eb, and doubtless to the full satisfaction of her owner, the sloop was purchased together with the usual "pea-pod" tender. She was a new and sturdy little craft in the regulation Friendship style of lobster sloop at the time when, in that noted region of boat builders, they turned out much better work than was generally the case at a later period.



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By this time Uncle Eb was well along in years and during that winter and spring had not been in his usual robust health. Only one trip "down East" had been made, and the *Alpha* lay at anchor in a secluded nook of the harbor, with quarter lines run ashore and made fast to trees. Uncle Eb rowed across to her almost daily, attended to drying out sails, often pumped a few strokes till "getting a suck," but spent much time in his garden and doing various chores about the house. Although himself the last to admit it, neighbors whispered that his strenuous days upon the water were about over, and that having grown reputedly "independent rich," it was time to stop "going." He became greatly interested in the doings of the young couple from the west and frequently went to sail with them in the newly acquired boat.

Finally it was arranged that he should take them to Bar Harbor, Mount Desert, to visit various points of interest, and to be absent on the trip several days. Enough provisions, water, bedding and clothing were stowed on board for an Arctic voyage, since consid'ble damp fogs were likely to be encountered, as Uncle Eb explained, and he had known fog, "dungeon black," to enshroud the entire region for six weeks, without even so much as the daily looked-for "noon-day scale."

They started, in great spirits, after an early dinner ashore, on a fine sunny day and with light, favoring breeze. According to the direct course proposed by the skipper which, regardless of charts, led between small islands, over connecting bars and close to sunken ledges, all of them



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unbuoyed and some of them not even indicated on the chart, the distance to Mount Desert Island was only about twenty miles. He even protested against taking on board the huge roll of new charts, recently ordered, claiming the plaguy things to be unreliable and leading to trouble, unless, perhaps, on certain regular, much-used courses. What they amounted to in places like Isle au Haut Thoroughfare, for instance, was, in his opinion, "jest merely laying a trap to ketch strangers." Two vessels, at least, he had seen ashore on ledges, of which charts gave not the slightest indication, but judging from the number and extent of the charts contained in the roll, the young people had, at the time, visions of cruising on the entire Atlantic coast.

On getting out into the ocean, the unusual absence of ocean swell brought forth the repeated remark from Uncle Eb, that the sea was as "calm as a summer lake," but a light breeze, almost dead astern, still fanned them along. He suddenly announced, unconcernedly, that within two hours' time it would be "thick o' fog," a prediction definitely made by the feeling of his eyelashes and never known to fail. Of another thing he seemed certain. Either a fresh fog breeze would come in with the fog, or wind would later "fush out" completely and the latter might occasion vexatious delay. True to prediction, a fog of the densest mixture, known even in those waters, shut down upon them, but with it came no "fog-breeze," and what little wind there was gradually dwindled to the merest air from seaward. The boat, however, continued to move on slowly,



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and total loss of steerage way did not occur until daylight had nearly waned and the fog was, if possible, more impenetrable than ever.

Then Uncle Eb urged along slowly for a time with an oar. Still nobody felt or at least showed the least anxiety. The owner of the craft and his wife likewise, having implicit confidence in the skipper, actually enjoyed the situation, as unique beyond all experience, and gayly made preparations for supper in the cuddy. Uncle Eb's only complaint was that perfect smoothness of the sea gave little or no trace of the rote upon the rocky shore to give warning of its proximity. Soundings, however, showed fast-lessening depth of water and when, after quick blasts upon the fog horn, he said that the faintest echo was to be detected from high land ahead, he appeared satisfied and at once named their probable position.

The sails were lowered, a light anchor let go, and to avoid an occasional slight rattle of main sheet blocks, the boom was put into its crutch. In the absolute silence ensuing, another period of intense listening followed. The shutting in of a black, moonless night further intensified prevailing gloom, while in the narrow ray of light from the cuddy lamp could be seen, for a few feet only, the wet fog slowly drifting past. Aside from their own voices the single sound to be heard was the big drops of condensed fog intermittently pattering on deck from mast and rigging and all had been glad hours since to don the new oilskins with which the craft was liberally provided.

At length the skipper pulled the "pea-pod" alongside and declared his intention of rowing ahead a short dis-



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tance in order to find just how far the boat lay from shore, and to identify his landfall, though the latter certainly seemed impossible under the circumstances. Bidding the young couple blow the horn frequently, that he might readily find them on his return, and promising to often shout himself, Uncle Eb rowed off into inky blackness. The horn was blown as directed, but once only his voice was heard in reply. No other sound of any description ever came and what happened to Eben Carter remains today as great a mystery as it was sixty years ago.

A night of indescribable horror followed for the two left in the boat. Until after daybreak they never ceased to blow the horn, when, attracted by its sound, a lobsterman rowing out early in his "pea-pod," to pull his gang of pots in the still dense fog, found them and later got the boat into Seal Harbor, Mount Desert.

After a doctor's care for the hysterical young woman and much needed rest at this place, by buckboard and boat they reached Green's Landing, the southern extremity of Deer Isle, and took the mail carrier's sloop across to Isle au Haut. Completely cured of the least desire for boating they stayed only long enough to pack up and arrange for the sale of their craft and with the fervently expressed wish never to set eyes on another lobster sloop, they left the island.

Years ago a lifelong resident of a small town directly on the northern coast, made the striking and long-remembered statement that a wreck more than any occurrence nearly always sufficed to bring out the dog-fish nature inherent in mankind. The force of this remark lay in the



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fact that dog-fish, so abundant at times, are the smallest but most voracious variety of shark, and well known to instantly attack and devour any mutilated member of the school.

The master of a vessel unfortunate enough to "stub his toe" by getting ashore on the coast in fog or storm was too often, by many, considered fair prey for pillage and loot of every description. It is a serious accusation, but as to its truth in many cases, ask any old coastwise sailor, coast dweller, and especially any former member of the crew in one of the numerous Government life-saving stations on the coast, in those days of much shipping.

For over thirty years the writer had, especially in winter, unsurpassed facilities for noting the atrocious acts often accompanying wrecks on the coast, though sometimes lamely excused by the familiar old cry of "findings havings." In cases without number those engaged in plundering a burning building or in making off with goods hurriedly removed from threatened houses, might exactly as well have termed their loot as "found." Yet the strangest thing about it all was that many fairly well-to-do and respectable citizens, who would have scorned engaging upon such business under ordinary conditions, seemed to regard wrecked vessels as giving full license to what was nothing less than theft, and that, too, of an especially despicable nature.

The rather indefinite laws of salvage certainly allowed picking up adrift or otherwise rescuing property in great danger of total loss, but such property must be kept strict account of and later given up to rightful owners, who,



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then, were to pay as salvage, a percentage on estimated value. This was in many respects a broad law admitting at best of different interpretations, endless arguments and controversy with, in the end, comparatively small recompense.

Particularly at night, in stormy weather or in dense fog, it was often thought best by the wreckers to avoid, if possible, all such uncertainty and to make off in boats, at once, for some good hiding place with everything obtainable and so luckily "found." The towns of lower Penobscot Bay and Isle au Haut are not to be thought of as containing, in those days, a greater proportion of people eager to profit by a wreck, than existed in other localities along the coast. Isle au Haut, however, not only secluded in location, but surrounded by dangerous ledges, many of them sunken and unbuoyed, notoriously subject to dense fog and heavy winds, offered special inducements for both wrecks and illegal wrecking. It lay almost in the direct path of large vessels bound coastwise from east or west and so was liable, in bad weather, to "pick up" more than its share of unfortunate craft and, above all, nefarious proceedings upon the water might often remain unknown on the mainland for days. Merchant vessels, however, were not the only ones having to reckon with Isle au Haut, its ledges and fogs.

In 1885, the large mackerel schooner *Mary Powers*, of Portland, was operating miles out at sea in the neighborhood of Matinicus. A hard, southeast storm, with the usual thick weather of the kind commonly known as a "brush" or "breeze o' wind," made it advisable to run for shelter



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in Isle au Haut Thoroughfare. Not making the rocky point at its mouth, in the time expected, and seeing nothing in the thick fog, the schooner was brought to on the shore side, hoping the better to locate her position by the sound of rote. This proved her undoing, for had she kept her former course a few moments longer, she would have entered safe harbor. As it was, immediately after keeping off again she crashed on Trial Point Ledge and at once bilged.

It was already growing dark and the crew, believing the vessel doomed to certain destruction, hastily gathered a few valuables, and the two dories on deck not being thought adequate, made a risky landing, with the big seine boat towing astern, in the scant lee of Trial Point. Here they spent the night, poorly sheltered by a thick growth of wind-dwarfed spruces.

Nearly opposite Trial Point Ledge was a small house occupied by a lobsterman and his numerous family of small children. This man, who may be called James Carter, for most of the year kept a sloop and two "pea-pods," on heavy moorings, behind a long, bare ledge just abreast of his home. Through a momentary lifting of the fog he had caught an instant's blurry glimpse of the vessel's plight before all was again obscured, and excitedly made known the fact to his family. Soon after, the storm, following the frequent habit of southeasters in summer, suddenly "fushed out" to a light air though fog still continued.

It being Saturday night, Carter's wife started two of the children off for some much-needed article at the store in "the Thoroughfare." By an almost direct path, trodden



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day or night and in all weather, the settlement was little over a mile distant. At the store the children gave away the news that a vessel was ashore on Trial Point Ledge. Meantime, Carter, thinking that he might, to use his own words, later "gaft onto something worthwhile," took a "pea-pod" and pulled off to the wreck. He had some difficulty, on account of the sea, in boarding her, but little in unreaving halyards, cutting loose what blocks were within reach and securing, among other things, a goodly supply of canned goods from the forecastle, already half full of salt water. Dories nested on deck could be attended to later.

This material was stowed in the "pea-pod" and as he was starting for shore with a load, to take proper care of his booty before daylight, the happy thought struck him that since the vessel had no anchor down, and the crew had left her, she was totally abandoned and his property by right of "findings havings." At least so Carter viewed the matter; but in order to make good his claim, he must stand by the vessel and on no account to allow anyone else to so much as make a line fast. He did not dare leave, even for the trip ashore with his loot, but as the vessel's slanting deck was even then frequently drenched with spray, he at length got into the "pea-pod" and rode out the night in the lee of the wreck, securely made fast by a stout line.

With the first glimmer of daylight and further diminution of the sea, he again came on board and was engaged in cutting the sail from the mast hoops, when there appeared the first of several lobster sloops, which had beaten around



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from "the Thoroughfare" to see what might be picked up. News, especially of a wreck, spread mysteriously and quickly about the island. In most explicit terms Carter informed the newcomers that he alone was by law sole owner of the vessel, and threatened the roughest treatment of any who should attempt to share in his prize.

In the midst of the quarrel, loud hails came from the tip end of Trial Point, and the vessel's skipper, accompanied by numbers of the large crew, in his turn threatened dire vengeance upon any and all pilferers. For the first time, being made aware of the crew's proximity and also realizing that increasing daylight made all movements visible, those in the lobster sloops freely bestowed parting blessings on the head of James Carter and sailed off about legitimate business in the Bay.

Carter, firm in his belief that by virtue of having found an abandoned vessel, he could hold his claim by remaining constantly on the spot, and hoping that his wife would bring him food until further arrangements could be made, stayed on board. Here he was found by the schooner's captain and crew, when they arrived in the heavy seine boat launched from the rocky shore at the earliest moment made possible by rising tide.

Tumbling over the vessel's lee rail, now heeled close to the water's edge, regardless of Carter's threats and protestations, the men tersely consigned him and his claims to the lower regions. They seized the contents of his "pea-pod" and at once began stripping sails and remaining gear from the schooner. This stuff, with all else of value, was thrown into the seine boat alongside, and after the captain had in



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most forcible language, assured Carter that his actions should not go unpunished, the boat pulled away for "the Thoroughfare," about three miles distant, taking the dories in tow. Here the first food since the hasty afternoon "mug-up" of the day before was tasted and the schooner's mainsail was soon made into a tent for shelter.

A letter to the vessel's owners was posted and a word also sent asking the nearest wreck-master to come at once. They arrived in due time, soon to be followed by an underwriter's agent, and the three arranged for a meeting with James Carter, who, according to expressed opinion, was clearly booked for jail.

At about this time it was noised around the village that the schooner had slid off the slippery, kelp-covered ledge on which she had hung, and lay nearly on beam-ends, in deep water at one side, with main topmast broken short off and but a few feet of the masts visible at low tide. Later reports added that the spring stay, between the masts, was also broken, and that they were greatly spread apart at the heads. This could mean only that the vessel's hull was badly "hogged" or dropped at bow and stern by resting on a very uneven bottom with her heavy ballast. In short, the vessel's back was as good as broken.

A close survey by those most interested confirmed such reports, and all things considered, it was finally decided not to attempt raising and repairing. A heart-to-heart talk with James Carter followed. As a result, he was made to realize that his supposed knowledge as a "sea-lawyer" had got him into a scrape from which he could escape only by pleading for mercy and showing that a large family would be left help-



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less in case the matter was pushed. Finally he was allowed to go free, though on probation from the wreck-master.

In the fall of 1885, a large schooner, bound from the eastward for New York, deeply loaded with a hold full of laths in bundles and with an enormous deck load of the same, grounded on a bad ledge in the Deer Isle Thoroughfare. By good right she was too large a craft to have attempted this intricate short cut from the eastward into Penobscot Bay, unless, perhaps, with a steady leading wind which she certainly did not have when just before night and with dense fog fast closing in, she was forced to make a hitch to windward in the narrow passage.

Unluckily the vessel misstayed in the fickle breeze and though an anchor was instantly let go, there was no room for paying out sufficient scope of chain and the schooner fell off again on the same tack, going ashore at half-ebb tide, on a steep ledge only a few feet from the spar buoy marking it, and not two hundred yards from the spot where anchorage had been intended for the night. A kedge anchor was at once run off some distance, in the vessel's yawl boat, and an attempt was made to heave her clear with the windlass, but the rocky bottom offered no good holding ground and under strain from the windlass the small anchor at once "came home."

Meantime the falling tide had already caused the craft to heel noticeably and that she was bound to "lay down" badly was plain to dwellers in the little town close by. It was thought probable that the vessel would fill on the flood tide. While expression of sympathy for the captain were by no means lacking, other remarks, made on shore, indicated



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a quite different spirit. "The blamed farmer of a skipper had no business up in here, anyways, with a big vessel like that," it was said, and also it was muttered that "a few laths would come in handy as a pocket in a shirt."

Laths, it should be said, in any northern community where lobstering existed, were in constant demand. Further westward, heavier slats of red oak, sawed for the purpose at some mill, largely took the place of spruce laths as making more durable if more expensive lobster pots, but on most of the Maine coast laths were in general use. Great numbers of traps, though heavily ballasted on bottom, went adrift in storms; buoys being fouled by the endless stream of coast-wise traffic, warps were broken and traps thereby lost. For one reason or another, new traps were always needed and the manufacture of lath traps occupied stormy days the year throughout.

Here was a large vessel laden with laths tied in round bunches, badly ashore on the ebbing tide within easy distance, night fast falling and the eternal dense fog making everything invisible a few feet away. On all accounts it looked like an uncommonly good night for laths. Men in their "pea-pods" soon began appearing on the lee side of the schooner, now having so rank a list to port that one rail was under water, and found the crew trying to secure bunches of laths which threatened to roll overboard from the high deck load.

Certain goods had already been removed from the cabin and lay heaped on the quarterdeck, ready for instant removal, if necessary, to the yawl boat. The night's work now began in earnest. At first a few bunches of laths that had



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rolled over the side were eagerly fished from the water, but as the number of boats steadily increased, so did the boldness of their occupants. Oars were thrust far inboard from the boats and used to pry loose bunches of laths, and fish-gafts, brought for the purpose, were of much use in clawing them down the incline and into the "pea-pods" alongside. In vain the captain and four members of the crew, including the cook, remonstrated vehemently and otherwise tried to prevent the pillage.

The sight of laths being loaded into boats which disappeared, always to return for more, incited greater rapacity, and each visitor seemed bent on getting his share regardless of consequences. They operated, at length, on nearly the whole lee side of the vessel and when the captain appeared from the cabin with a revolver and threatened to shoot, he was jeered at and dared to fire. This, as they well knew, he did not dare to do, for, after all, was not the vessel in a most precarious position? Were they not intent upon saving property doomed to certain destruction? Who could say that they did not intend keeping a strict account of goods saved and to claim only the percentage of value allowed by salvage?

The good work went on until, realizing that as many bunches of laths had been secured as could be safely taken care of before daylight, the boats gradually dispersed into the fog. Meantime the vessel had ceased to list and it was believed that her port side had brought up on bottom, which careful soundings showed to be fairly smooth, and the pumps, as well as could be judged in the vessel's heeled position, showed no alarming increase of leaking. The



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young flood tide was now due and was anxiously awaited as it would soon begin righting the vessel unless she was seriously damaged. At length she began slowly to lift and by daylight was once more afloat, when the anchor was hove up and aided by the current of flood tide, the vessel was soon towed to a safe anchorage.

Spurred to immediate action by the sight of a much depleted deck load, the captain could scarcely wait to swallow breakfast before being set ashore to note a protest before a notary and to interview the wreck-master. The latter was a retired skipper who lived some little distance inland, now too old for his job and soon to quit it, sure to make enemies and with little in it for him at best. He offered no encouragement for punishment of the offenders, saying, that laths, in his opinion, were a temptation which few lobstermen could withstand and that it would be next to impossible to locate or identify the bundles or men in question. Much better to only think himself lucky to have a seaworthy craft still afloat and doubly lucky if owning as he said, shares enough in her to hold his position as master after getting her hung up in such a place. The half-filled bottle of camphor, so commonly kept on window ledges, foretold westerly wind and of course clear weather. Why bother with the loss of a few laths instead of improving a chance to the westward? The season was getting late, and so forth. The captain left with the distinct idea that nothing satisfactory could be had from this quarter. The wreck-master, however efficient under other circumstances, plainly wished to avoid dealings with townsmen who might jeopardize certain property of his own. A breeze from the northwest was even then fast



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driving the fog seaward and, on the whole, it seemed best to make the most of clearing weather and fair wind by at once filling away again on the trip to New York. "Dangers of the sea" had, before this, included partial loss of deckload.

Early in 1884, the large side-wheel steamer *City of Portland*, bound from the westward for Eastport and Saint John, attempted to save a few miles' distance by cutting into Penobscot Bay through the Fisherman's Passage. This was a fairly clear channel, leading between Monroe's Island and a long string of ledges and small islands, reaching several miles to the southward. It had, however, a bad ledge lying nearly in the middle, but plainly marked by a spar buoy. On this ledge the steamer struck, in a thick fog, tore a great hole in her bottom, and at once sank until her upper works and part of the hull proper were all that showed above water. There was little sea running, but passengers and most of those employed on board thought terra firma, of any sort, desirable, and taking to the boats landed on Monroe's Island, later being carried the short distance to the mainland at Owl's Head or to Rockland itself.

It was fully realized that the ship lay in a much exposed location and with the rising of any considerable sea, was likely to begin breaking up. The lifesaving station, at distant White Head, had been notified of the stranding and made all haste to be on the scene with their lifeboat, which at that time was propelled by oars. Meanwhile, the usual treatment given wrecks was to be expected.

In this respect, wholesale looting of the almost unprotected steamer exceeded all apprehension. Like magic dozens of small craft appeared through the fog and soon,



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aided by darkness, men boarded the vessel and helping themselves to everything they could lay hands on, threw their booty into boats alongside. The officers of the steamer and others choosing to remain on board, were outnumbered and well-nigh helpless. No such golden opportunity had been offered in the vicinity for years and for long after stories were told of valuable goods obtained at the wreck of the steamer *Portland*. People who lived reasonably near at hand secured the lion's share of profit by getting in their work before the arrival of the lifesaving station boat, but they were not the only ones to make at least some attempt in the matter.

At the time, the writer lay at anchor with a small yacht in a harbor of Penobscot Bay, nearly twenty miles distant. Several lobster sloops from there had started for the wreck immediately on learning of it, but had reached the scene too late to secure anything without much risk. Among the men, however, was one who resolved not to be completely "skunked," as he said, by returning empty handed. Sailing about the wreck, then heeled considerably, he noticed swinging a foot or so clear of her lee side, a piece of large new line, evidently a part of a coil somewhere inboard. The dare-devil plan struck him of shooting his sloop up alongside and seizing this end of line, to make it fast and at the same time keep the sloop off under a fresh breeze into the obscuring fog. This was skilfully done, although on board the steamer at the time, there were known to be several men engaged as watchmen and whose boats swung clear by lines from the vessel's bow.

Expecting every moment that the line towing astern



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would jam or be in some way prevented from running over the steamer's rail, the bold lobsterman had a knife to cut it instantly, but after sailing some distance off and not being brought up short, he concluded that the line had all run overboard. Bringing his sloop into the wind, he began hauling in what had been secured. Rough measurement, by the rule that fully-outstretched arms make a fathom between the hands, surprised and gratified him to find that his prize consisted of nearly fifty fathoms of brand new hawser.

The compass course homeward was resumed, but the harbor was not entered till after dark, and next morning the sloop lay at her usual moorings, the big standing room containing nothing but two damaged lobster pots.

On the night of September 23, 1904, in a southeast gale, long remembered for its severity, the fishing schooner *George F. Edmunds*, running for harbor under close reefs, with weather "thick o' rain and fog," crashed ashore near the tip of a precipitous, heavily wooded point not far from the Camden hills in Penobscot Bay. Nests of dories, lashed on the trawler's deck, at once were swept away; men and masts, with all other spars, went over the side, and the crew struggled, for a few minutes only, in a tangled mass of rigging and spars, furiously thrashing against sheer walls of granite which afforded no chance of a hold for a dozen bruised and drowning sailors.

Spilling most of her pig iron ballast through the torn bottom, the vessel drove up almost against the cliff-like rocks, where falling tide left her within easy reach of men bent on pillage. On this point were a few scattered houses with a small village only a short distance beyond. Within a short



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time wreckers completely stripped her of manila cables, anchors, the contents of the cabin and forecastle and, in short, of everything worth taking off.

The crews of fishermen were known to live on the best the market offered and as the schooner had been fully stocked before leaving port, the forecastle yielded an immense lot of canned goods and other provisions not spoiled by salt water. It was several days before the vessel's owners received word of the disaster, and when they arrived the wreck had been picked bare as a bone, but nothing whatever was to be seen or heard of the pickings.

The services of the local wreck-master seemed likely to be of small account, and the case calling for deep probing by an authority higher even than that of the nearest lifesaving station, all particulars were speedily laid before Capt. Silas Harding, Superintendent of United States lifesaving stations, in the First District, embracing the coast of New Hampshire and Maine, with monthly visits to each station, and with headquarters in Portsmouth, N. H. He was urged to come in person, which he promptly did, and on arriving, began a thorough investigation which lasted for several days and disclosed several startling and almost unbelievable facts, which gave evil distinction to the wreck of the *George F. Edmunds* over any other wreck in recent years.

Captain Harding had long been a member of a United States lifesaving crew. He then served some years as captain of the station and later was made Superintendent of the entire district. Few men had longer or more varied experience in the matter of wrecks, and he said to the writer that never had he known a quicker or more complete case of stripping



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or one involving among others, so many leading inhabitants of a neighboring settlement. Nobody seemed to have had the least idea of delivering a single article for salvage adjustment, and it was evidently intended to be simply and solely a case of "findings havings." Since dead men tell no tales, circumstances rendered the odds in favor of the finders.

The Superintendent's investigation went to the very bottom of the whole miserable business. Never had the brave words, "hew to the line; let the chips fall where they may," better applied than in this instance. The business-like, determined manner and plain language of the official, produced something of a scare in the vicinity, and in some cases articles were brought forth at a late hour, which it was claimed, had merely been saved from destruction and would have been duly accounted for. But Superintendent Harding was not to be fooled and the search went on relentlessly. In cellars, attics, and haymows; in wells, under platforms, and in secure hiding places among rocks, near and distant, were unearthed marine gear of every description. The heavy anchors were dragged up over the steep rocks and concealed by underbrush some distance in the woods.

Most surprising of all, in the cellar of the house occupied by the Elder, who regularly preached in the little church of the place, were found stowed away an array of canned goods unmistakably from the wreck. The Elder, but recently located far inland, had no scruples which prevented accepting needed supplies from this source, and with his neighbors, benefited by this unexpected windfall.

Later, Superintendent Harding, in speaking of certain occurrences at this and other somewhat similar wrecks,



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wrote: "If anyone doubts the truth of the facts, send him to me." They *were* doubted, and among others, not fully acquainted with the matter, by Gen. J. L. Chamberlain, noted for gallantry in the Civil War, and later Governor of Maine. As an ardent yachtsman he wrote under date of November 27, 1905, giving a list of places on the coast with which he was familiar and among them naming the very locality on which the *Edmunds* struck. He then said that he had never known of such occurrences, though there had formerly been such was beyond doubt, and so forth. In reply to the Governor's letter was sent an extract from Superintendent Harding's report on the *Edmunds* affair, with certain other well-substantiated statements in regard to the recent stranding of vessels. Several weeks passed before anything more was heard from the Governor. He then wrote that after having looked up the matter of wrecks, he was very sorry to admit the truth of certain accounts, and added that his knowledge had been entirely too much that of a pleasure seeker in summer weather.

Now let one more good man express his opinion on the subject. Sumner I. Kimball, General Superintendent of life-saving stations, with headquarters at Washington, D. C., under date of October 5, 1905, wrote: "Wrecking practices, such as described, are not confined to the New England coast, but reach from one end of the Atlantic seaboard to the other, where no effectual restraint to the rapacity of picaroons exist. The U. S. Life Saving Service has wrought a wonderful change in the results of shipwrecks, and such wrecking practices are rapidly disappearing."

Notwithstanding this optimistic statement, the dog-fish



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in human nature continued to manifest itself, whenever possible, at wrecks for many years after, and picaroons were more or less in evidence until the great stream of American coastwise sailing commerce became a thing of the past.



## VIII æ The Vanished Pinky

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THE PINKY schooner *Maine*, built at Essex, Mass., in 1845, venerable survivor of a once numerous breed distinctly American in origin, and famous as sea-boats never excelled, has recently been broken up, and with her passes the pinky. These unique little vessels may therefore claim the additional distinction of being the latest type of sailing craft to become extinct upon the water, and as such, merit renewed attention from those interested in marine affairs. Yet many other types have preceded pinkys into disuse upon our coast. Not to mention obsolete smaller craft, years ago bilanders and snows yielded to brigs proper, which in turn gave place to brigantines and hermaphrodite brigs, the latter soon called merely brig again, though a direct compromise with the simpler, more practical schooner rig. Schooners, ever increasing in size until of huge dimensions, gradually drove from this coast barques, barquentines and ships, in short, all manner of American owned square-rigged craft engaged in trade. As commercial vessels, even



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schooners are now so very fast disappearing, that but for yachts and the comparatively few auxiliary craft still wearing canvas, in most cases much abridged, the cunning skill of sail cutting and making, even sailing itself, bid fair soon to be numbered among lost arts. Abandoned sail lofts in every seaport tell their own story.

Sharp-sterned vessels, first called pincks, then pinks, were not unknown on our coast even in the seventeenth century. A Dutch pink came to Boston as early as 1633, and the pink *John and Susan* of Salem, Massachusetts, sailed to Spain with dry fish in 1678, while the next year a Boston-owned pink arrived there from Dartmouth, England, and bore forty-five much crowded passengers at that.

Pinks continued to be built in Massachusetts with increasing frequency for many years, and, though all small vessels, made, besides fishing, frequent offshore trips, trading especially in the West Indies. Chiefly ketch rigged, they carried in addition to fore-and-aft sails, the usual yards for one or more square sails, even the single masts of early sloops being so equipped.

Sharp-sterned vessels were then no new thing when at about the year 1800 they were in the midst of building at Chebacco, Massachusetts, on the northeast side of Cape Ann, later known as Essex, large numbers of ten- or twelve-ton craft, sharp of stern, and intended exclusively for fishing. These found ready market in all ports of the northern coast, being widely known as "Chebacco boats," and were immediate progenitors of the pinky schooner later so numerous upon this coast.

Quantities of the best white oak then existed for frame,



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planking and ceiling, and often building specifications demanded size and excellence of material, with a profusion of "natural crooks" and knees enough to make more modern shipwrights gasp for breath. Steaming and bending planks was not then altogether in favor, many for years considering the process detrimental to timber. Among these was the builder of the frigate *Constitution*, who in 1798 would have none of it, though her planks were of live oak and doubly difficult to bend so sharply as the ship's model required above water.

A heavy growth of white oak in the vicinity of Chebacco no doubt chiefly accounts for the first building of vessels in that most inconvenient little place. It is located some distance up a narrow stream which, winding its way through marshes, not only drains on the ebb tide, but has at its mouth a bar to be crossed only under certain conditions, and even then with grave risk to vessels of large draft. There is no harbor, and when once safely over the bar, vessels are at sea, and in strong easterly winds the locality is notoriously untenable.

But plenty of white oak at hand was a great temptation, and white oak growing in undoubtedly salt air held further attraction. Authorities at the not distant Kittery Navy Yard early recognized this fact, and one of the requirements for white oak to be used in building there, was that it should have grown within a certain distance of salt water. Salt air was, and with good reason, supposed to render the oak not only tougher but more durable, and this was probably one reason why shipbuilding first took so firm a hold at Chebacco. As Essex, the town has retained this hold ever since,



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and in spite of its unfavorable location and the fact that the white oak has long since gone, Essex is one of the few places in New England still to build fishing schooners.

Chebacco boats had no bowsprit, the foremast being stepped as far forward as possible, and the two sails were fore and aft in true schooner style, with masts noticeably bare of yards. A stout stem rose high above the rail, and to it was attached the fore stay. The rail, except for its stanchions, was always open, as fishermen in those days had a prejudice against solid bulwarks, considering them dangerous to small craft.

They fished, of course, "hand lining," from a "standing-room" which extended amidships nearly to the side, and in bad weather could be covered in. On account of this open space these craft were sometimes known as "standing-roomers," but with sharp stern, bluff bows and generous freeboard, they already had the making of the pinky, so numerous later on. As "Chebacco boats," however, they were known in great number all over that part of the coast, though mainly in the fishing port of Gloucester. Chebacco boats gradually increased in size, and with this came various changes all tending to the pinky as known to many living. Although still minus a bowsprit, the open rail gave place to very high bulwarks with ample scuppers, and the standing-room was decked over, but still the chief feature of the full-fledged pinky was to come. Well aft the rail took a rather abrupt rise, and terminated in a high crotch wherein rested the main boom when fishing or at anchor, thus forming the pinky stern unmistakable. Stoves being unknown, fishing craft continued using brick fireplaces in the cuddy below



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deck forward, with brick chimneys to the deck, or wooden ones well plastered on the inside. Above deck a removable wooden contrivance smoked more often than not, and good authority claims that much smoke in the cuddy first introduced smoked halibut as an esteemed article of food.

Certain choice portions of the fish known then only to fishermen as palatable when dried, were often hung in the cuddy for that purpose but primitive cooking and heating arrangements of the pinky class thus first made known to a waiting world the welcome gastronomic fact that wood smoke enhanced the flavor of halibut. This should not be forgotten when sounding the virtues of the pinky.

Pinkys, therefore, may be described as full-bodied, bluff-bowed craft with bows standing high out of water. Aft there was a peculiar upshoot to the bulwarks, giving a decided scoop to their sheer-line, and tapering prettily to a sharp stern. Their hulls were clean as a fish aft and as buoyant as a barrel forward. They rode the seas like a duck and made no fuss nor performed any of the wild antics a vessel with wider quarters, aft, would go through when climbing a sea, breaking through the crest, and sliding down the back of it.

In the early part of the eighteenth century, Chebacco boats and larger ones of the same general type, but already known as pinkys, formed almost the entire fishing fleet of Gloucester, and numbered by the hundreds, some of them even carrying gaff topsails and staysails. Among larger craft the few exceptions to pinkys were square-sterned vessels going to the distant Grand Banks solely on account of more carrying capacity. Even these were mostly Essex-built, though for many years the place made a specialty of its



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early love, the pinky. As their fame increased, the type was occasionally built elsewhere, but Essex was the birthplace of nearly all pinky schooners ever seen upon our coast.

Its shipwrights early established a fine reputation as good workmen and for much over a hundred years "Essex-built" has meant high praise. Pinkys were reckoned good sailors in their day, but their chief superiority was shown in gales and rough water. They were celebrated as being very deep or "long-legged" craft, one in particular being recalled, which of only twenty-six tons' register, drew nearly ten feet of water aft, though much less forward, great "drag" being a peculiarity of the type. Extremely full "apple" bows prevented deep plunging, and lifted quickly in a heavy sea, but sharp floor and great depth made plenty of ballast necessary. When, however, in needed trim, unusual weatherly qualities of pinkys were everywhere fully recognized. Short cocked-up bow sprits and under them little billet heads, unadorned by trailboards were given new ones and in many cases were added to those already built, but the foremast always remained well forward. Close to this a windlass with wooden drum revolved by inserting handspikes in holes at the end, slowly weighed anchor.

Green painted hulls up to the usual "thick strake" of the bends, and above that black, with due striping in sundry colors, was considered the proper thing for well-kept pinkys. Copper paint being unknown, the bottom was sometimes covered with verdigris, or by various mixtures in which tallow and pitch were often ingredients.

Seldom over thirty tons' burden, and generally less, these little craft often rode out in comparative comfort gales of



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wind which severely taxed much larger vessels. Given plenty of sea room, and storms had few terrors for the crew of a pinky in good condition. As giving better idea of their small size, it may here be said that a representative pinky, the *Julia Ann* of twenty-seven tons, built in 1819 and lost by striking a ledge while still being used in 1908, measured on deck fifty-four feet, six inches. Her beam was fifteen feet, four inches, with great draft of water peculiar to her class.

Speaking of their renowned sea-going qualities, the former skipper of a pinky lately said, "You come to take and heave her to in a breeze of wind with a two reefed foresail, and the hellum lashed jest right, and you might as soon go below and take your comfort. She wouldn't keep falling broad off same's some will, but would lay nigh head to it, and take them seas like a cork stopple. Outside of spray there wouldn't be scursely a bucket of water come aboard.'

Corroborating the skipper's words is the following tribute to the pinky schooner taken from *The Fisherman's Memorial*, a Gloucester, Massachusetts, publication of 1873. "These little vessels from their extreme buoyancy and their offering so little resistance to the power of ocean waves, would make comparatively good weather at times when larger ships would be laboring, plunging and straining every plank and timber to its utmost capacity of endurance. They would mount almost on even keel upon the crest of the highest seas, and settle into the hollows with the ease and grace of a wild duck, and such a thing as 'shipping a sea' was not thought of."

A few more words showing the seagoing ability of pinkys must now suffice, though much more could be said on this



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subject. In October, 1851, there occurred a memorable storm in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Large numbers of Yankee fishing vessels, "Baymen," so called, were engaged there at the time and so many of these craft either foundered or were driven ashore when attempting to beat out of the Bay that the storm took the name, "The American Breeze." Among the fleet trapped in the harborless "bight" of the Bay was the little thirty-ton pinky schooner *Ocean*, then owned in Kittery, Maine. At that place it was always claimed that the *Ocean* was the only craft to succeed in rounding East Point and making an offing. On Cape Ann, however, honor was also given to the pinky *Nautilus*, of Rockport, which, it was said, beat out of the Bay to safety, though with a very few other and much larger schooners. At any rate here is more high tribute to the great seagoing ability of the pinky.

Many pinkys had built in them "wells," these being tanks kept filled with salt water by holes bored in the bottom, and used for carrying alive fish or lobsters. Vessels thus equipped were alone known as "smacks," though on land to this day the term is wrongly applied to all craft engaged in fishing.

Naturally it may be asked, why did they cease to build so excellent a type of fishing vessel? The only answer is the demand for larger vessels and a desire for more speed. That most notable feature of the pinky, the rather abrupt rise of the bulwarks aft, which coming together formed a high perch for the boom, was not feasible in much larger craft of the schooner rig. Extending practically without support, several feet beyond the sternpost, it was none too strong



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even in small craft, though contrary to general belief on land, its total loss would not affect the seaworthiness of the vessel. It was simply a convenient device for securing the main boom while not under way, though often used for spreading nets, etc., to dry. Especially when thus festooned, the high, peaked overhang aft was undoubtedly picturesque, but its use in larger vessels carrying much heavier spars was not thought desirable. This overhang was, however, somewhat stiffened by the "horse-beam," which extended above deck from rail to rail just forward of the rudder head. Beyond it reached a tiller made of great length to obtain necessary space for being put "hard up" or "down" on the narrow afterdeck. Steering wheels of crude design requiring blocks and tackle, were not unknown on much larger vessels, though many such still used tillers.

The sharp stern of the pinky's hull proper, no doubt contributed largely to the vessel's welfare in rough water, but also lessened needed deck-room for larger crews, and square sterns gradually came into vogue on fishing vessels. Then as a matter of speed, the extremely bluff bows of genuine pinkys certainly were not conducive to the fastest sailing, though much less a detriment than might be expected. Beneath water nearly all stumpy bowed old craft were fairly easy in their lines, and often had long runs rarely improved upon since, yet desire for larger vessels as well as greater speed prevailed. Especially did pinky designers believe in the old idea of giving vessels "a cod's head and mackerel's tail." Probably even at this early date was heard a stock remark often derisively applied later on



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to vessels of a build too full for general approval: "That craft would butt every sea three times, and then go around it!"

At any rate, schooners of greater tonnage, square-sterned and not quite so bluff-bowed, began to be built, mainly at Essex, while the number of pinkys slowly diminished. Among the first, if not the first of the square-sterned fleet to reach Gloucester, from Essex, was the forty-five ton schooner *Accumulator*, launched in 1835, and fast followed by many others still larger, all square-sterned, and slowly taking on sharper models.

In 1850 appeared in Gloucester, from Essex, the fishing schooner *Romp*, of a model which at a sudden jump approached more modern ideas so much as to astonish all and scare many fishermen. Though later thought something of a tub, it was then freely predicted that the *Romp* would never succeed in getting a crew, yet she went without disaster to the Grand Banks, and led the way to even larger and speedier, if never more seaworthy craft.

As evidence that Essex builders were much on their job, it is noteworthy that the *Accumulator*, long superseded as a fishing vessel, was in the late nineties owned at Isle au Haut, Maine, and in company with the *Cordova*, *Valparaiso*, and several other former fishing craft of about the same age, was considered seaworthy enough to be carrying granite from Deer Isle quarries to Boston.

The year 1845 saw the last pinky built at Essex. This was the *Maine*, of twenty-three tons, and further noted as being the last pinky in actual commission upon the coast. After ownership in a dozen different ports, and the subject of



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photographs and snapshots galore, she finally brought up in Jonesport, Maine, where, with her demolition at the age of over eighty, and while still afloat at high tide, the type ceased to exist upon our waters.

Various attempts have been made in recent times to preserve pinkys as relics. The late Admiral Peary was especially interested in them, and at last succeeded in buying the *Mary*, built in 1811. He had her for some years at his summer home on Eagle Island, Casco Bay, where at his death she still remained hauled up. A wealthy summer resident expended much money in building a stone dock at Little Harbor, near Portsmouth, N. H., in which to keep afloat a pinky—the *Eagle*, but ice made it necessary to pull her out on land, where for lack of suitable covering from the sun and fresh water she fast became a “has-been” in all respects.

Scattered along the northern coast may yet be found a very few remains of pinkys on land and in the last stages of decay, but upon the water the type has forever vanished, and modern work craft of all sizes, driven in part or wholly by machines, now have their day.



## IX    The Ancient Town of Castine

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THE ancient town of Castine lies upon a narrow peninsular of the mainland, jutting north and south between Penobscot Bay and the Bagaduce River, which is really no river at all but simply a contracted arm of the Bay, running inland a few miles. From a trading post with Indians, established about 1640, by the French Baron De Castin, it grew to be the most important place in the locality, and during early years was fought for by French, English, Dutch and Americans. There is no doubt concerning the town's claim of occupancy by four different nationalities, though its capture by a Dutch privateer, in 1676, was a matter of only a few days' duration.

However absorbing reading is the earlier history of Castine, one great event stands out prominently in connection with the Bay itself. At the time of the Revolutionary War, the English had established a stronghold, fitted with can-



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non, drawn up a long, steep hill from their frigates in the harbor, and garrisoned by troops. The state of Massachusetts, entirely on its own hook, determined to send by water an expedition for its capture, and in Boston fitted out with guns nineteen vessels of all sizes and rigs, together with twenty-four unarmed transports. Only one of the number was a real man-of-war, the others being privately owned merchantmen chartered for the occasion and manned by their own crews.

Among the supplies were twelve hundred barrels of rum. Besides seamen there were a few marines and some six hundred perfectly raw militiamen in the fleet which, on its arrival in Penobscot Bay, July 25, 1779, was described as the "most beautiful ever in Eastern waters." It was in full charge of Commodore Dudley Saltonstall, a naval officer with quarters on the one frigate in the expedition, but to whose cowardice and lack of coöperation with American land forces, may be laid not only failure to oust the British from their post, but total annihilation of his fleet in Penobscot Bay and the lower river.

It is true that one or two brave attempts were made by landing parties to scale the most ill-chosen spots on the precipitous bay shore of Castine, but through wilful neglect to agree upon concerted action with American militia on land they ended only in severe loss of men. In vain the American commander and other officers repeatedly plead, orally and by letter for united assault, and warned that delay was most dangerous in giving the British time to improve the fort and receive additional ships and troops sent from Halifax. When begged to attack the three British



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frigates anchored in the harbor, on the other side of the town and partially disarmed through sending guns ashore to the fort, Saltonstall replied that nothing would induce him to take a ship into the "damned hole."

Under one pretext or another, but accomplishing nothing of any account, he frittered away the weeks until on August 14, seven English warships, under Sir George Collier, were reported coming up the Bay from Halifax. Forthwith, Commodore Saltonstall began hurried preparations for ignominious skedaddle with his entire fleet. Two of his vessels were captured between Long Island and Belfast, though one of them had been run ashore, with all sail standing, permitting the crew to escape. One craft, after beaching, was set on fire by the crew, who also escaped. One was blown up off Fort Point Cove and another was burned nearer Belfast. All the remaining vessels escaped up the Penobscot River and were either burned or blown up by their crews to prevent capture.

So ended the great expedition to Penobscot Bay, with its worse than failure, directly owing to the cowardice and obstinacy of Commodore Saltonstall, who was later tried by court martial and cashiered from the navy. At the time it was generally believed that he was in the pay of England, and certainly there was good reason for such a theory. The commander of the fort admitted that had combined attack by land and naval forces been made soon after the arrival of the American fleet he should have surrendered at once.

In the time between the close of the Revolution and the evacuation of Castine by the British in 1815, the town made slow progress toward becoming a port of importance. A



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number of fine, spacious dwellings, however, had been erected, and were doubtless much appreciated by the English officers who appropriated them during the War of 1812. After the enemy's departure in 1815, Castine decidedly revived. Many more wharves were built on the harbor side of the town, and Castine went deeply into the coasting trade and also sent her own built and manned ships abroad.

A custom house was established; a revenue cutter made her headquarters at the town; courts were held until 1836; and later, a state normal school was established; handsome dwellings were built and a weekly newspaper flourished, though others had preceded it for a time. Many more vessels, houses, stores and wharves were built and business of various kinds started up. There was a chain factory, a ropewalk, a large brickyard, several smithies and sail lofts, but most important of all, Castine became the great salt depot of Northern New England.

At present, and for many years past, this statement would seem of slight significance, but in the days when every seaport annually sent "bankers," on long, cod fishing trips, and instead of ice, great quantities of coarse salt were part of each vessel's spring outfit, any town having practically a monopoly of the business was bound to be noted on the coast.

Castine, in her own ships, imported salt from Cadiz, Liverpool, and other ports, stored it in large salt houses built on the wharves and, selling it by the ton to hundreds of vessels from all quarters, established a trade which, to a great extent, accounts for the many fine old dwellings in the



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town. Unlike the ice houses of later years, salt houses were of the strongest construction and some of them, standing today, though used for other purposes, have massive frames of virgin pine, which are marvels of bracing, the mortices being pinned with oak dowels.

In the heyday of fishing, nearly five hundred craft have been counted in the spacious harbor, waiting for salt. Incidentally it may be mentioned that this harbor, while containing good anchorage in any desired depth of water, also has, directly abreast the town, a greater depth than is to be found in any harbor on the Atlantic coast. Two square beacons, one of stone and the other of heavy timber, both surmounted by a spindle, once marked two ledges, but ice destroyed them, and with the decay of shipping, spar buoys have since sufficed.

In 1783, an English transport, having brought troops from Halifax, lay at anchor in the harbor when an American battery of three guns, on Nautilus Island, so damaged her that she was run ashore just above the main settlement where she filled with water and was abandoned. The wreck, long a prominent object, close to shore, by degrees was broken down by ice or picked away by relic hunters. For a generation past, however, only bottom timbers of the vessel have been accessible, even on the lowest "dreen" of tides. Until within a dozen years and at short intervals, it has been possible to pry off fragments of oak sound as ever, though worm-eaten and black as ebony from long action of salt water. It has been disputed whether this vessel was the *St. Helena* or another and much older craft called the *Provi-*



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dence; but the best informed authorities emphatically declare that in spite of printed matter to the contrary, it is the *St. Helena*.

In 1812, the unpopular war with England put a decided damper on all shipping, and for a second time Castine was held by the British. It was during the dispute with the Mother Country that the English sent several warships, with troops from Castine, up the Penobscot River, capturing and ill-treating various towns upon it. Not daring to risk the perils of navigation further up the river, the vessels anchored at Bald Hill Cove, just above Winterport, and landed a strong detachment of troops that marched up the river road, the main object being the capture of the U. S. S. *Adams*, then undergoing repairs at the town of Hampden. Finding her loss inevitable under the circumstances, the Americans blew her up. Angered by this and by a show of resistance offered by militia at the so-called battle of Hampden, the English sacked the village and continued on to Bangor. Here eight vessels on the stocks were at once burned flat, and six more were loaded with provisions for the garrison at Castine. Bangor itself was only spared on most humiliating terms of ransom, and on the way back, not content with destroying all craft found afloat, they forced each place to give bonds to deliver at Castine, within a month, all vessels owned.

Peculiar spite against American shipping, which even then threatened to rival the English, in certain cherished lines of foreign trade, was most marked on this memorable expedition, when destruction of vessels seemed the para-



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mount object. Doubtless one chief object was, as far as possible, to prevent craft from joining the already numerous fleet of privateers.

An account of the raid, printed less than a year after the occurrence, states that German mercenaries and sailors from the ships showed the most brutality. Peace, no doubt hastened by the glorious victories of our navy at sea, rendered void all obligations forced from river towns. After the various exploits of the frigate *Constitution*, it is doubtful if English newspapers would again refer to her as "a bunch of pine boards flying a striped rag."

After the general decay in shipping, and especially of the great lumber trade in which Castine had many vessels engaged, attempts to conduct manufacturing of various kinds followed, but all seemed destined to ultimate failure. Singular inaccessibility of the town by land was no doubt its chief reason, for at all seasons the thirty-six-mile drive to Bangor was an experience not to be forgotten. In winter the roads were often blocked by heavy snow; the clay soil of the region produced deep, sticky mud until late in the season, and on long, steep hills, seldom to be equaled, protruding ledges of granite that must be climbed at intervals. No wonder that the Castine road was known as the worst among the many poor ones in the vicinity, and that steamboats took the bulk of travel in all directions, when ice did not prevent.

Castine, near the tip of the peninsula, and eighteen miles from any railroad, had, at first, sailing and then excellent steam communication with many ports. As commerce neared its vanishing point, the town was among the first to



## THE ANCIENT TOWN OF CASTINE

feel the beneficial effects of summer visitors, who bought land, built many fine cottages and transformed a moribund old seaport into a noted summer resort.

As a result of the passion for tearing down old houses instead of repairing them, many priceless relics have gone and at present only one house remains that stood at the time of the Revolution. In another dwelling, built soon after, recent repairs uncovered three-inch pine plank, with seams calked like those of a ship.



## X    Rockland and the Lime Trade

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ASIDE FROM the distinction given to the town through building the record-breaking clipper ship *Red Jacket*, Rockland's chief claim to almost nation-wide celebrity has been, and still is, the making of lime. Formerly known as Thomaston lime, since the separation of the towns in 1850, the brand "Rockland Lime," has achieved much fame, though in modern methods of manufacture the business has lost the picturesque features which for many years distinguished it.

Lime rock abounds in the vicinity and the product of numerous quarries was formerly brought by ox or horse teams to be burned into lime at kilns on the harbor shore, where their output was easy of shipment in schooners. Under constant heavy teaming, deep ruts and mud, the latter always a specialty of the locality, became so unbearable that thick planks were laid on the road. A few years of



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the rough traffic saw their finish, and railways with specially designed rolling stock succeeded and are now universally in use.

Because of consolidation, the number of quarries, once counted in hundreds, has been greatly reduced in recent years, as well as the number of kilns, lime sheds, etc., along the shore. Lime is now shipped in huge steel barges, towed by powerful tugs, all belonging to one great concern, and in spite of the fact that the best lime was made in kilns burning wood exclusively, coal or oil is now used. The one-time great business of supplying immense quantities of wood for the lime kilns is a thing of the past. A few kilns, relying upon the better quality of lime produced by wood burning, continued its use for some years, but in the end gave it up.

The furnishing of the great number of spruce casks required was, in itself, no small business. Not only were they made in cooper shops, but many farmers in the vicinity, wishing to eke out an income during the winter months, manufactured rough lime casks at home.

At one time the kilns numbered much over a hundred and at each burning, used, on an average, some thirty cords of wood, and from all points on the northern coast, where a small vessel could possibly be loaded, from early spring until ice forbade, they swarmed into Rockland harbor almost without number. This harbor, though very spacious, was greatly exposed to all gales on the eastern board, until, in comparatively recent years, the present stone break-water was built. This was accomplished only after great effort to secure a governmental appropriation. It was built



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too late for the greatest service, and is another case of locking the barn after the horse was stolen. Never was one needed more, for the harbor teemed with shipping—"limers," "kiln-wooders," and lumber coasters—and in easterly storms disasters were frequent enough. Vessels often dragged their anchors, fouled other craft, or went ashore with more or less damage, sometimes becoming total wrecks. Vessels discharging or receiving cargo at the wharves were in even a worse position, if unable to haul off, and not a few, including at least one steamer, either broke up outright or started seams and sank at their berths. What happened to wharves on these occasions can be imagined. To a great extent the long breakwater did away with one danger attending shipment of lime by schooners, and Rockland harbor in an easterly became less the dread of mariners.

At one time bringing wood to be piled into the ever hungry maws of kilns employed even more craft than did the shipping of the lime itself. They hailed chiefly from Maine ports, but the Maritime Provinces contributed largely, furnishing a unique class of vessels, peculiarly their own, but short-lived, and for years since unknown in our waters. These were the famous "Saint John wood-boats," almost wholly built of spruce, sometimes at considerable distance inland and, by many men, with the aid of oxen, blocks and tackle, slowly skidded to a launching place.

With sails often close-reefed so that the booms could be raised above monstrous deck loads, and yawl-boats hanging over the wide stern from clumsy wooden davits, these queer craft were a most picturesque addition to the queer



## ROCKLAND AND THE LIME TRADE

assemblage of "kiln-wooders" in Rockland harbor. As a class they were probably the least expensive craft ever built on this side of the Atlantic, though Yankee schooner-rigged scows largely developed in the palmy days of the lumber trade, must have been close seconds in this respect.

Many wood-boats had no bowsprits, one alleged reason being that they often loaded wood in such remote sylvan spots that bowsprits were too likely to get mixed up with trees on the steep banks! In such craft the foremast was stepped forward as far as possible, or "in the eyes of her," and topmasts were lacking, so that the rig closely resembled that of the "Chebacco Boats," built at Cape Ann over a hundred years ago, though hulls differed, and they were much larger. Aft, there was no overhang whatever; the wide stern stopped short at the stern-post and the rudder hung unblushingly "out-of-doors."

The cabin or "house," entirely on deck, was of the plainest possible construction, both outside and in, and it was said that brick fireplaces survived on some of these craft long after stoves had come into almost universal use. Possibly the general stumpy look of these queer craft gave rise to the old and often quoted dialogue, supposed to have been between two skippers: "Where's the other one?" "What other one?" "Why, the one they turned to and sawed that one off'n!"

A very noticeable feature of wood-boats, in the kiln wood business, was the towering deck loads, which unusual breadth of beam and the comparatively short run to Rockland enabled them to carry with more or less impunity. So high was this cordwood piled that often the helmsman



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could not see over it, and under certain circumstances steering was directed by a man stationed forward on top of the load, who bawled instructions aft.

These vessels, like some of our own lumber-laden craft, were sometimes so deeply loaded that amidships water stood several inches deep across the deck, even with the craft on an even keel, only bow and stern being well out. But in the case of a wood- or lumber-loaded vessel, this was not quite so dangerous as it would seem. There was always risk of losing part of or even the whole deck load in a rough sea, no matter how well secured, but such a craft could not actually sink, even when completely waterlogged through some hopeless leak. In this submerged condition vessels not infrequently sailed slowly into port with the man at the helm standing knee-deep in water, buoyancy of the cargo alone preventing sinking.

Not a cent was spent for mere looks, and so rough and primitive in construction were some of these wood-boats as to be veritable curiosities of shipbuilding. Some enterprising soul once put an extreme specimen on exhibition at a Boston wharf. For ten cents were to be seen crude and even startling makeshifts of every description. It was easy to believe that the unique craft grew far inland, as a distinctly bucolic touch was given by an anchor which had flukes consisting of ploughshares, fastened on by wire lashings, while the stock was simply a limb of yellow birch to which bark still adhered. In this strange outfit the skipper who built it, together with his wife, were no small part of the show and the wonder grew that Boston was ever reached.



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Yet wood-boats, of course better built and fitted, besides running wood to Rockland lime kilns, often carried immense loads of lumber to all New England ports, and have been seen, though rarely, as far south as Philadelphia. They were not only of great carrying capacity but were known as more than average sailers, and the peculiar model was doubtless well adapted to the business, though durability was certainly not a strong point. The skipper of a wood-boat once candidly admitted that in ten years it was time to junk the best of them. His own craft looked as if this limit had been reached full many moons previous, but criticism of Nova Scotia built "kiln-wooders" then came ill from a Yankee, for many native built craft in the trade seemed decrepit to the last degree.

Running kiln-wood to Rockland was the last ditch for many an old coaster so worn out in all respects as to be deemed unfit for longer trips. Often in charge of sick or superannuated captains, with mere boys and half-wits for crew, such vessels, after many years of visiting all Atlantic ports or those of the West Indies, ignominiously ended their days as kiln-wooders from near-by points.

Exporting lime from Rockland in rough casks absolutely required vessels of a higher class than those comprising the motley fleet engaged in bringing wood. Aside from the risk of fog, shoals, storms, collisions and other dangers common to coastwise traffic, in the cargo itself lay inherent the constant menace of fire. Here was no place for a leaky craft. Deadly enemies like water and lime must be kept apart or most serious trouble would surely ensue, and even the staunchest vessels were none too safe in this hazardous



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business. The slightest leak might start a fire among the casks of lime in the hold and this fire, instead of being fought and possibly extinguished by water, as in ordinary cases, was only increased by its use. No wonder then that great care was necessary in the selection of vessels for the trade, though perhaps no one particular build can be given as representing the typical "Rockland limer."

All were schooners of moderate size, and former fishing vessels, if still in good condition, were preferred by many, as their sharper floors gave better chance for building stout platforms in the hold, and so raising the lowest tier of lime casks from possible contact with bilge water. On the other hand, the greater draft of such craft was an objection in some cases.

After filling the hold with lime casks, many yielded to the dangerous practice of carrying a tier of casks on deck, though "dunnaged up" several inches, and covered as well as might be with tarpaulins. Fire here, however, was by no means so serious a matter as fire in the hold. It was easy of detection and, if necessary, any or all of the casks could be thrown overboard.

To do away with such risky exposure on deck, vessels were built with a second deck raised above the main deck, high enough to take lime casks and running well forward with open rails. Many old craft were thus remodeled and such vessels, though comparatively few in number, may be called ideal, if not typical Rockland lime schooners. Yet in spite of all precautions from one cause or another, water too often got in its work at the lime, and as any old sailor or



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resident of harbors can testify, a "limer" on fire was no unusual thing.

As has been said, fire in the deck load was easily discovered and dealt with, but at the first warning of it below, given by the well-known smell of lime being slacked by water, attempt at smothering was the only resort and this meant instant drastic action. First, a few provisions, coats, etc., were thrown out of the cabin and the place tightly closed. A cask of lime was hastily broached, its contents mixed with water, and the plaster so made liberally applied to every open crack or crevice around doors, windows, cabin skylight and smokepipe—in short, to every place in the vessel which might possibly admit air. Then, well sealed up, as it was called, the craft headed for the nearest harbor and the usually long waiting game began.

Regardless of weather, all the men were obliged to live entirely in the open, and even after harbor was reached they often remained on board for several days, waiting developments. In this case, lowered sails furnished precarious shelter by night and from rain, while food could be had from shore, but the rule of "Don't give up the ship" generally prevailed to a marked degree. When, however, it became settled that fire still seethed below, sails were removed to some safe place, while the crew was discharged. The captain and mate took quarters on land, but maintained constant watch over the vessel, always anchored some distance from the shore. A "limer" with a cargo on fire was a sort of marine pariah in any port of the coast, likely to burst into flames at any minute. No wharf would



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receive her and other craft shunned near company at anchor as if pestilence existed on board.

How far the fire below had progressed was at first only conjectural, for examination was impossible without opening cabin or tightly closed hatches, which of course meant instant admission of air and this was the one thing to be avoided. Constant fresh plastering up of suspicious looking cracks or tiny spots where smoke and smell might issue, was part of the day's work for those on watch, and often weeks passed before it was deemed safe to open the cabin door for a peep inside. Impatience often led to this being done too soon, and the smothering process received a setback which not infrequently ended in total loss. "Limers" often lay "sealed up" in harbors for months before fire was either out or had so increased that the desperate kill-or-cure act of scuttling the vessel was the only alternative, and even then the cure was certain to be only partial at best.

Intense heat below showed itself only too plainly by blistering paint on deck and top sides, while the smell and spirals of smoke, ever increasing from all parts of the vessel, told that a climax was at hand. She was at once towed to some shoal and secluded part of the harbor where low tide exposed her bottom to boring or sometimes to cutting holes with axes. Rising tides would certainly extinguish fire among the seething lime casks, but in so doing was more than likely to ruin the craft, in case she did not take fire and burn outright.

Each cask swelled to bursting when reached by water and this swelling of the cargo broke deck beams, humped



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the deck itself more or less, and often burst open the vessel's sides. Even if not burned, she was commonly so damaged as to be beyond repair, and there is scarcely a harbor on the coast that does not contain the grisly remains of at least one "limer." In one port can yet be counted the charred, barnacle-studded, rockweed covered floor timbers of no less than six burned lime schooners, all given up after long attempts at smothering fire while at anchor in the harbor.

These half dozen, however, represent only a small fraction of stricken "sealed up" lime vessels seeking port in distress. The great majority succeeded in extinguishing their fire and proceeded, though only after much labor and long, anxious waiting.

One newly built craft, in particular, remained at anchor fighting fire for over three months, but then was in condition to put to sea again. It is true that occasionally some craft survived even scuttling and, though badly damaged, was thought worthy of being towed away for repairs, but the case of one scuttled "limer" deserves mention.

At low tide, immediately after being grounded on adjacent mud flats and by many considered as good as gone, two large holes were chopped low down on one side. Wet by rising tide, bursting casks of lime not only humped the deck amidships over a foot, but broke several deck beams and many planks, opened waterways and badly started seams fore and aft. Great volumes of stifling lime smoke poured forth, followed by that of burning wood, and late that night the hull began to blaze furiously, apparently settling the vessel's fate. But the plucky captain and part



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owner, assisted by his two men, successfully fought these flames until high water did the rest by nearly submerging the hull.

To cut a long story short, holes cut in the bottom were covered with canvas and pieces of board nailed on, the worthless cargo of slacked lime in bursted casks was pried apart, shoveled or hoisted out and dumped overboard, the vessel pumped out and again floated. She was badly burned both below and on deck, with the latter still humped, seriously weakened and practically open, the pump constantly at work, and yet enough additional foolhardy men were found to take the craft *under her own sail* back to her home port, distant two hundred miles on the Maine coast.

With the gradual extinction of our sailing fleet, limers and kiln-wooders have entirely passed. Lime, however, is still made and the whole business may be said to be conducted on strictly modern principles. Especially its shipment, in huge steel barges towed by steam is, to use also modern terms, a safer and saner "proposition" than in those absurd old pod-augur days.



## XI æ Shipbuilding Along Shore

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ROCKLAND, located near the western entrance to Penobscot Bay, is not only noted for its lime making, but for the vast number of vessels, large and small, built in the vicinity. To some extent it felt the influence of the clipper ship era, which swept the country from the launching in New York of the first extreme clipper ship, the *Rainbow*, in 1845, till fifteen years or more later, when carrying capacity ceased, being sacrificed to speed.

In 1853, the clipper ship *Live Yankee*, of 1,637 tons, was built in Rockland, and next year the ship *Red Jacket*, of 2,006 tons, was launched. She was not only thought a monster in size, but she made the voyage from New York to England in thirteen days and one hour, thus establishing a record never since equaled by a sailing vessel. Two years later, the clipper ship *Euterpe*, of 1,984 tons, was built, and though very fast, left no record for all time, as did the *Red*



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*Jacket*. The latter, with numbers of others of American-built vessels, was soon bought on English account.

The new idea of clipper ships had already taken root in the straggling village of Frankfort, halfway up the Penobscot River, to Bangor, and here was built, in 1852, the clipper ship *Flying Arrow*, of 944 tons, followed, in 1853, by the *Spitfire*, of 1,550 tons, and next season, by the *Nonpareil*, of 1,438 tons, all three vessels later under the English flag.

That same year the small village of Robbinston, far east on the very jumping-off place of Maine, launched the clipper ship *Red Gauntlet*, of 1,038 tons, and going further west, Damariscotta, Maine, beat the rest of the State, by two years, launching the clipper ship *Queen of the East*, of 1,275 tons, and the *Alert*, of 764 tons, in 1851.

Bath and Richmond, on the Kennebec River, also built during the clipper ship period half a dozen vessels coming strictly under this famous class, and this comprises all ever built in Maine. Compared with the scores of other large ships built during those years the number is not impressive, and it is evident that "Down Easters," as a rule, believed that ability to carry cargo counted for more than extreme speed in making passages.

A few miles up Penobscot Bay is the little town of Rockport, also burning lime to some extent, but in this account most noticeable for building the four-masted ship *Fredrick Billings*, not rated in the class of extreme clippers, but more than double the size of most of them and only equaled by Donald McKay's ill-fated *Great Republic*, built at Boston and burned before making a voyage. The ship *Fred-*



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*erick Billings*, constructed in and hailing from what was hardly more than a village on the shore of Penobscot Bay, was, at least, one of the largest wooden sailing ships ever built in the country, and her launch attracted hordes of spectators from neighboring points, and even from more distant towns, where launchings of large vessels were common events.

Speaking of large vessels recalls the opinion expressed fifty years ago by Captain James B. Hatch, a deep-sea mariner of unsurpassed experience. For the greater part of his long life he had been in command of ships engaged in world-wide traffic, several of them, including the clipper ship *Midnight*, owned by the old Boston shipping firm of Henry Hastings and Company.

A few years after retiring, Captain Hatch was asked to name the size and rig of the vessel he would choose in which to make a voyage around the world, regardless of earning capacity and considering only ease of handling, safety and general comfort of those on board. After a few minutes' thought, Captain Hatch replied that, provided model and construction of hull were exactly to his liking, he would pick a vessel of not over six hundred tons and of bark rather than ship rig. This was in full accordance with the fact, well known among mariners, that a comparatively small wooden vessel could be built stronger than a very large one, it not being feasible to increase strength in proportion to length and tonnage, though not at all implying that a large one could not be built of strength sufficient to meet the various extraordinary strains to which all ships were subject.



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That they were not always so built was no secret, especially in the later cases of many enormous five- and six-masted coal schooners. Among those best qualified to know whereof they spoke it was remarked that but for their enormously powerful steam pumps, certain huge coal schooners, of recent build, could not be kept in service.

Concerning the numerous handsome schooners of great size launched from a widely known shipyard, it was grimly said that no vessel from that source ever touched bottom and came off again and when, a few years later, a five-masted schooner of 2,249 tons, built in this yard and loaded with coal for Portland, Maine, grounded, in fine summer weather, at the Isles of Shoals, it was no surprise that she at once filled and eventually became a total loss. Early that winter, the hull, stripped by a wrecking company of spars and anchors, and relieved of what coal could be saved, went adrift and became the largest derelict ever known on the New England coast. A large revenue cutter was at once telegraphed for from Boston, and this craft, with three tugs owned in Portsmouth, pulled for ten hours steadily before getting the half-sunken wreck into the lower harbor of Portsmouth. With decks nearly awash she drew thirty-six feet of water; no wharf could be reached and there were no anchors or chains to hold her. In this dilemma she was worked into a sheltered cove as far as possible, and every available line from cutter and tugs run ashore to trees or around great boulders on the beach. As no answer was received to advertised bids for breaking up the wreck, the government was obliged to hire men who, with dynamite to blow it into numerous sections, which were gladly given



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for firewood to those offering to tow them off, guaranteed that no part should again get adrift.

The writer then had ample opportunity to make careful measurements of various timbers used in the construction of the big craft, and with striking results. In port at the time was the three-masted schooner *Annie F. Conlon*, of 519 tons, built twenty-three years before, in Portsmouth, of genuine New Hampshire white oak, and considered in her prime. In a talk with the captain who had her built under his own supervision, the writer was furnished with many details which were most interesting to compare with measurements just made on the hull of a vessel nearly four times her size.

The most significant fact developed was that the frames in the 2,249-ton vessel were in general several inches smaller and much wider spaced than in the 519-ton craft. Further, the oak used in the frames was brought by the cargo from a certain section of Virginia and when compared with New England white oak, was "brash," open-grained and short-lived. Although but seven years old, there was much evidence of decay in the oak of the great schooner, and, indeed, several of those engaged in dismembering the hull averred that a third part of the frames were more or less rotten. Why steam pumps played so important a part on many great schooners in the then prosperous business of carrying coal then became easily understood.

Further up the Bay lies Camden, nestled under its high hills and with a harbor too open and small for comfort, though in later years much enlarged by dredging. Lime making, with the constant demand for vessels, gave much



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employment and Camden did its share toward furnishing craft for the lumber trade, while later engaging in pursuits which gave the town merited distinction on the coast. At the time of great prosperity in the coastwise coal trade, Camden built many immense four- and five-masted schooners for the business, and boasted that such great craft were not only built, but fitted out completely ready for sea, with every article, from huge anchors and chains to the smallest block used for color-halyards, made directly *in the town*.

In addition to such unusual facilities, a marine railway hauled out of water many craft for repairs, and with those operated at Rockland, Bucksport, and Bangor, took ample care of frequent cases. In 1846, there occurred in the Bay, nearly abreast of Camden, what narrowly escaped being a great tragedy. The steamer *Bangor*, the first iron, screw, sea-going craft ever built in America, had been put on the route between Boston and Bangor. While on her second trip eastward, in Penobscot Bay, she took fire, but was run ashore at Pendleton's Cove, Long Island, and all the passengers were safely landed. All but the iron hull then burned.

Later, being rebuilt at Bucksport, she went for a time on the Line again, but soon was taken over by the government and under the name of *Scourge*, did duty in the Mexican War.

At the head of the Bay, Belfast was prominent in building not only for the coasting trade, but many larger vessels sent on foreign voyages. Fine old elm-shaded streets with stately dwellings, indicate the great prosperity enjoyed by



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this and all other Bay or River towns, once deeply interested in shipping.

Searsport, with a harbor open to southeast storms, and Stockton, reaching to Fort Point Cove, built many small and large vessels in their day, and the former town, especially, became noted as the residence of many shipmasters engaged in world-wide trade. Though long since retired, a goodly number of these offshore veterans still occupy roomy dwellings with a glorious view down the Bay, once so enlivened by sails, but now woefully bare save for the white canvas of occasional yachts and the smoke of a steamer or a tug towing barges to Fort Point.

In Searsport, and the same holds good in all other towns of Bay and River, the once great, predominating industry of shipbuilding has gone completely, and left only the barest traces of yards or wharves. Sometimes not a vestige can be found, showing the location of shipyards known to have flourished. Only by poring over old custom house or other records, and sometimes from verbal accounts, can be realized the almost incredible number of vessels built in the locality or the foreign trade once carried on.

In numerous houses in Bay and River towns, are preserved oil paintings, mostly done abroad, of ships either built or owned by some of the family, generally officered and often manned entirely by townspeople. Some of these pictures have been given to relatives in all parts of the country, and others rest secure in various marine museums, but far too many have been wheedled away by dealers in antiques who, of late years, have scoured the country and



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kept strict tabs on objects brought in ships from foreign lands. If at first not definitely for sale, these relics of a by-gone industry were, in the dealers' estimation, likely at any day to be in the market and well worth close watching by repeated visits.

"Half models" of vessels, made in sections by master builders, and from which the craft was built, though now much sought, are less frequently found. Once so common as to be thought little of after the ship was built, except in certain cases, there was scant attempt made to preserve them and shocking stories are told of bucksaws converting hundreds of them into firewood.

With one or two notable exceptions, the Bay towns have much smaller populations than half a century ago, and in some cases have diminished to a handful. At a certain town on Deer Isle, a few miles distant, in a location not favored by summer visitors, but once with foreign trade enough to warrant a custom house, the wharf attached is now represented by a heap of stones. On near-by ledges in the harbor, seals climb at low tide to lie undisturbed, basking in the sun, and in the top of a tall spruce, almost overhanging the long-abandoned custom house, a pair of fish hawks have for years built their bulky nest.

In 1906, the Bangor and Aroostook railroad extended its line down to Searsport, and there built a long pier. The railroad tapped a smaller growth of timber, inaccessible by way of the Penobscot River or its tributaries, which once would have been brought by rail to Bangor for shipment by water but was now taken directly to vessels at Searsport. This served to further diminish navigation, already woe-



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fully shrunken on the River, though large vessels were especially glad to avoid the towage and danger of the river trip. Still further bringing shipping on the Penobscot toward the vanishing point, was the unloading at Searsport of coal steamers and craft laden with fertilizer, destined for rail shipment to many distant points of the interior. A few, mostly old vessels, managed to struggle along in the fast expiring lumber trade, but each year saw more of them hauled up and stripped.

Up to the time of our entrance into the first World War, there were a dozen or two, whose launching dated back to the earliest days of the nineteenth century, but four years of disuse and neglect, during the war, proved their finish, and they never again appeared.

At the close of the war, the schooner *Victory*, built at Hampton, New Hampshire, in 1846, but owned in Penobscot, Maine, found herself distinguished as the oldest vessel still in use on either coast. Among other relics of bygone times, she still used a compass with *wooden* bowl, and rolled in a musty locker was a faded, much stained and patched American flag, bearing only the original thirteen stars, and evidently once belonging to an older vessel. For several years after the war, the *Victory*, always requiring repairs of some sort, had earned a scant living for her owner by carrying cordwood on short distances in Penobscot Bay. In 1926 she sailed up to Bangor, repeating the trip so often made in the busy days of the lumber trade. Here, at the dilapidated dock of a once flourishing marine railway, across the river, was stowed in her hold a mass of rusted-out machinery with other material pertaining to the long



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defunct concern. As befitting the oldest vessel still in commission, she took on board the last cargo ever loaded at the port of Bangor, and having justified her name by outliving all other craft, the schooner *Victory* spread blackened sails, and slipped down "Bangor River," with the fast-running ebb tide, on what proved to be her final voyage.



## Epilogue

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THROUGH the summer of 1931 George Wasson was hard at work on *Sailing Days on the Penobscot*, and even after he had completed his manuscript Lincoln Colcord was still battling with the intricacies of the record of shipbuilding. When proofs arrived Wasson was too ill to look at them, and he did not live to see the finished book. The prospect of death in no way terrified him, for he was a man of strong religious convictions. With a complete assurance of the endless life of the individual, he looked forward to meeting his two sons as he left his wife and daughter-in-law (to whom this book was dedicated). As he lay dying in Bangor, Dr. Lester Adams came to see him and remarked, "Well, Mr. Wasson, I see they've got you hauled up in drydock." "Yep, hauled up for good this time." And so, as Mrs. Eckstorm describes it, "on the twenty-eighth of April, 1932, George S. Wasson slipped his moorings. His friends observed that it was high water and he went out with the tide."



## SAILING DAYS ON THE PENOBSCOT

In the chapters concerning shipbuilding there are bitter references to the revival of shipbuilding on the Penobscot in World War I, and a note of sadness at what seemed to George Wasson the end of the maritime history of his state. But in World War II Maine men wrote a new chapter in that history. If on 5 December 1943 George Wasson was in any measure aware of earthly affairs, it must have given him a moment of pride when his widow christened the Liberty ship *George S. Wasson*, launched that Sunday afternoon at the yard of the New England Shipbuilding Corporation, South Portland, Maine. In the captain's cabin was one of Wasson's own paintings of a fishing vessel, given to the ship by Bliss Perry, who as the friendly editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*, had published many of his stories forty years earlier.

The *George S. Wasson* was rushed into commission with the feverish speed of that year, when, for the first time in the war, new construction began to outbalance the allied shipping sunk by German submarines. The ship's life was short, however, for she struck a mine at Milford Haven on 31 January 1944. Repairs were commenced at Cardiff, but the requirements of the artificial harbors needed for the invasion of Normandy were so pressing that the *George S. Wasson* was—with other damaged vessels—towed to the Baie de la Seine and there sunk as a block ship on 8 June 1944.

W. M. W.



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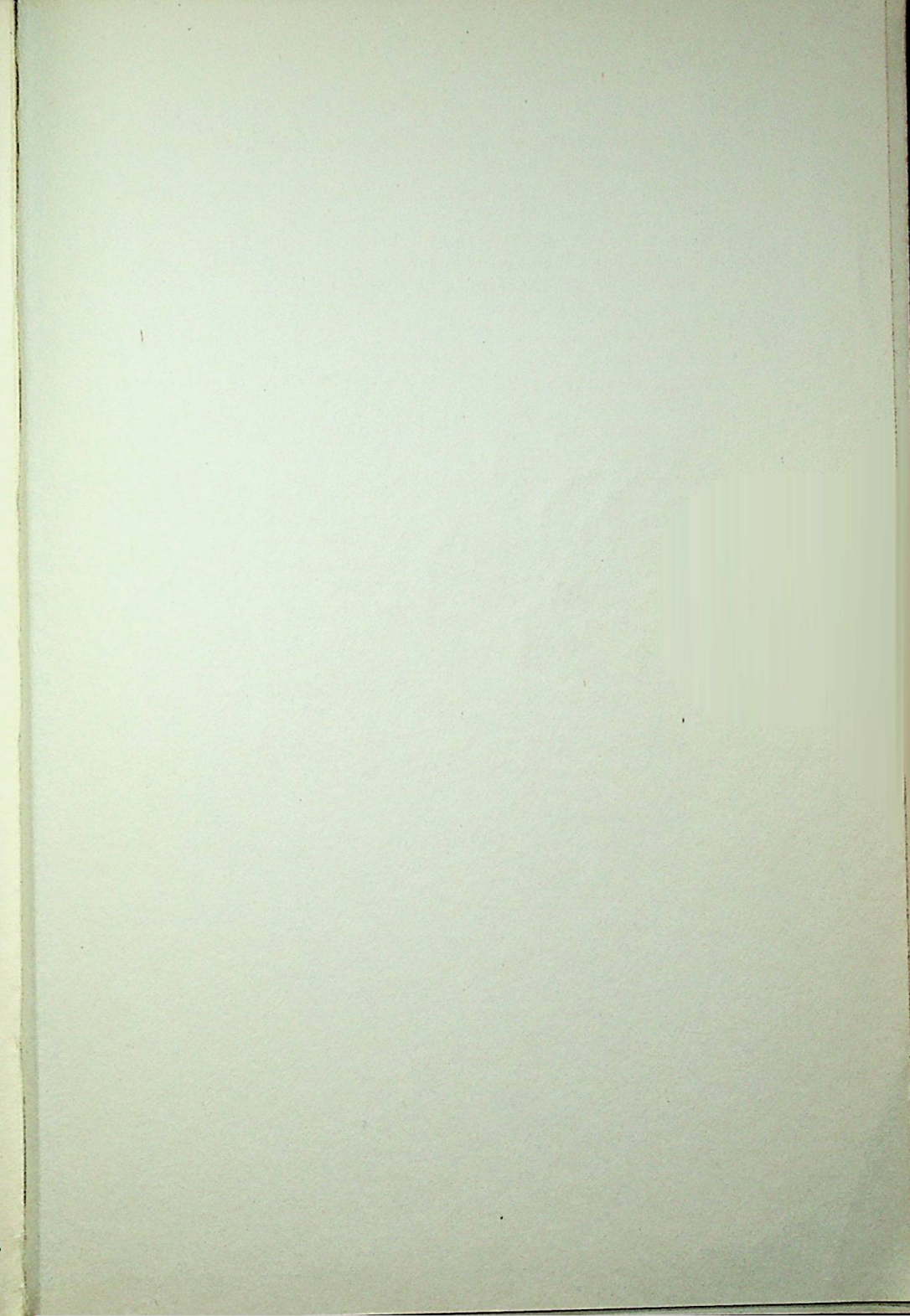
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# MAINE

BANGOR

Brewer

Orrington

Hampdon

Winterport

Frankfort

Prospect

Bucksport

Sandy Pt.

Stockton Sprs.

Fort Pt.

Searsport

Northport

Belfast

Lincolnville

Castine

Penobscot River

Islesboro

Sedgwick

Brooksville

Brook

MOUNT  
DESERT  
ISLAND

Southw

*Nautical Miles*





*SAILING DAYS*  
on the  
*PENOBSCOT*

ATLANTIC  
OCEAN

